

THE  
**Old Religion**

Demonstrated in its  
**PRINCIPLES,**  
And Described in the  
**LIFE and PRACTICE**  
thereof.

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*Jer. vi. 16. Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in  
the ways and see, and ask for the old paths,  
where is the good way, and walk therein,  
and ye shall find rest for your souls.*

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**The Third Edition.**

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**By JOHN GOODMAN, D. D.**

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**L O N D O N,** 9

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THE  
EPISTLE  
TO THE  
Pious Reader.

Good READER,



**T**Hou art here presented  
with a new Book concerning the Old Religion. As therefore thou art not to expect thy Curiosity should here be gratified with new Notions, (for I am not describing a new Way to Heaven, but directing thee in the good old way which the Holy Scriptures have marked out, and

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## The EPISTLE

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*which wise and good Men have all along walked in ; ) so neither art thou to think thy self disappointed, if thou meetest not with a Discourse modishly dress'd up, with all the fashionable Ornaments of Wit and Eloquence. For, give me leave to tell thee, though that would have been acceptable to the humour of the Age, and perhaps might without any great difficulty have been complied with ; yet it would neither have suited so well with the nature of the Subject I am upon, nor especially have fitted the Persons for whose sake this little Book was written.*

*That therefore which I here pretend, and which I hope thou wilt not fail of in the Papers before thee, is, First, A brief but plain  
and*

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to the Pious Reader.

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*and substantial Proof of the Grounds and fundamental Principles of Religion in general. Secondly, A Discovery and Confutation of several vulgar Opinions, which deform the beauty, and defeat the efficacy of Christian Religion in particular. And Lastly, A clear Description, a rational Deduction, and a serious Inculcation of the most important Duties of that Religion, wherein either the glory of God, our own comfort, or the peace and happiness of Mankind are principally concerned.*

*As for the management of these Points, tho' I have not given countenance to this Discourse by citation of Authors, nor either adorned the Text with fine Sayings, nor the Margin with great Names; yet I*  
hope

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## THE EPISTLE, &c.

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*hope thou wilt find a vein of sound Reason in it, and the spirit of the Gospel running quite through it. I assure thee, I have dealt sincerely and conscientiously herein ; I have impartially consulted the holy Scriptures ; I have made use of the best understanding God hath given me ; and I here set before thee (though not the product, yet) the result of many years observation, consideration, and experience. And so I leave it to God's blessing, and thy candid acceptance.*

Farewell.

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**T H E**

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A N  
**Introduction**  
T O  
An H O L Y  
A N D  
A Comfortable L I F E.

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C H A P. I.

*The Wisdom of being Religious.*

**T**HE Holy Scripture (that Book of Books, and Treasury of Divine Wisdom) expresses it self thus concerning Religion:

Psal. cxi. 10. *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom : and a good understanding have all they that keep his commandments.*

Eccles. xii. 13. *Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter ; Fear God, and keep his*

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*commandments: for this is the whole duty (or business) of man.*

*St. Luke xiii. 24. Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able.*

*Phil. ii. 12. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, &c.*

*2 Pet. i. 10. Give diligence to make your calling and election sure.*

*St. Matth. vi. 33. Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.*

*St. John vi. 27. Labour not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth to eternal life.*

*St. Matth. xvi. 26. What shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?*

By all which, and abundance of other such like passages, it appears, that Religion is as much our Interest, as our Duty; and, that Piety, and Care of another World, are not only the Commands of God, and his Impositions upon us, but the Upshot and Result of the best and truest Wisdom. For Wisdom doth not consist in Sceptical Jealousies and Suspicions, but in a Determinate Knowledge and Resolution what is fit to be done; not in a superficial smattering of many things,  
but



but in a clear and distinct apprehension of the just nature, value and moment of them; not in an endless hunting after Curiosity, but to know where to stick and fasten; not in peeling a flint, or laborious beating-out of unprofitable Difficulties, but in applying a Man's self to such things as are favourable and useful; not in tricks of Wit, Sophistry or Eloquence; and least of all in a Jest, or a Repartee: but to discover what is fit to propound to a Man's self, as his end and design, and by what means to attain it; to have great Things in a Man's Thoughts, and to despise and scorn little and petty Designs: In a word, to see a great way before him, and to be well provided for the future.

Now, all this is verified in Religion, more than in any other thing in the whole world; for here a Man's Mind is taken up with the greatest Thoughts, and sublimest Objects, God, and Eternity; he takes care to secure the main stake, his own Soul; he employs himself about things of the greatest moment and consequence: by enquiring about another World, he gives proof of the greatest foresight; in considering of it, he gives evidence of a sagacious temper; in resolving upon it, he shews judgment; in pursuing it by the means appointed, he

demonstrates the Command he hath over himself, and that he is led by his Reason, not ridden by his Passions; and by persevering in this course, he arrives at true Tranquillity of Mind, the Crown and Glory of Wisdom.

Accordingly we find by experience, that commonly where-ever there is a grave, thoughtful, sedate Person, such an one as is either fit to give or to take Advice, he is seldom destitute of a sense of Religion: But on the contrary, where-ever you see an incogitant shatter-brain'd Fellow, that knows not himself enough to make him modest and civil, that hath not so much Reason as to weigh an Argument, nor so much Arithmetick as to value any thing but what is present; that is so much under the power of his Senses, as scarcely to know whether he hath such a thing as a Spirit within him, or hath so much Drink about him, that his head works nothing but yest and froth; here is a Man cut out to be an Advocate for Scepticism or Atheism; this is the Person that will be captious against Religion, and malapert towards God Almighty.

But let such Men enjoy their humour as long as they can, they will be sure sadly to repent, or rue it at last: and in the mean  
time,

time, they only betray their own shame and folly, for their tongue will prove no slander to Religion; the mighty concern of which, is not only declared by God Almighty, confirmed by our own reason, and justified by our experience, but also affectionately recommended to us by all wise and good Men; by those whose sagacity and discretion is such, that we have no reason to suspect they are deceived or imposed upon themselves; and whose sincerity and integrity is such, that we can as little think they should have any design to impose upon us.

And therefore those Persons who being either prevailed upon by the evil Examples of the World, or discountenanced by the lewd Sayings of such as we mentioned e'en now, and (declining the ways of Piety and Devotion) give themselves up to a loose and irreligious life, are in the first place errant Cowards towards Men, whilst they are insolent towards God: And in the next place, they are false to the common Reason of Mankind, which obliges Men to provide for the future. In the third place, they are false to their own interest of Self Preservation. And lastly, they are false and ingrateful to their best Friends, whose counsels they forsake, and

abandon themselves to the conduct of the most silly and profligate Wretches.

But if any shall think to excuse themselves from this Censure, by suggesting, that they look upon Devotion, as either the effect of a weak judgment, or of a melancholy and timorous constitution : I add, that this makes the matter so much worse, as that it involves them, not only in the guilt of all the former, but also of extreme rudeness and incivility towards the best of Men.

To make all this more clear and convincing, and to lay the surer foundation of all that is to be said hereafter, we will now, in the next place, shew the Grounds upon which Religion stands.

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## C H A P. II.

### *The Reasonableness of Religion in general.*

**T**HAT which is meant by *Religion* (in the general notion of it) is nothing else but a due regard towards the Divine Majesty, a diligent care of approving ourselves to the Supreme Being, the Creator and Governor of the World : Or, which comes

comes to the same effect, the prudent ordering a Man's conversation in this World, so that he may erect his mind with comfortable expectations of the favour of God and Happiness in another World. Thus much we are taught by the Author to the *Hebrews*, chap. xi. 6. *He that cometh to God, must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* In which few words, we may observe, in the First place, the Matter or Duty of Religion, express'd by *diligent seeking of God*: And, Secondly, The two Pillars, or (as I may say) Poles of it, namely, 1. The Persuasion of the Being of God: 2. The Expectation of Rewards from him. The former of which most properly contains the first Rise and Reason of Religion; and the latter, the Motives and Inducements to pursue it.

If these two Pillars be united, they make so firm an Arch, that no Objection can shake the Building: but if they be taken and considered singly, they are each of them of mighty strength for the upholding of Religion.

§. 2. As for the former, If (I say) we consider the Nature of God only, that alone is able to possess us with an apprehension of the fitness and reasonableness of *diligently seeking him.*

It is true, we cannot see the Divine Majesty, as we may behold corporeal Objects, because He is of a Spiritual Nature; and for the same reason, we cannot see our own Souls. And it is true also, that we cannot fully comprehend Him in our Minds neither, because of his infinite Perfections: yet we cannot so much as doubt whether there be any such Being or no, if we do but bethink our selves in this one thing, namely, how we our selves came to be? For though, it may be, at the first blush of this question, we shall think it sufficient to say, we had our beginning from our immediate Parents, and they, in like manner, successively from their Progenitors; yet when we proceed on in our enquiry, so far as to consider and ask our selves, what it was which brought the whole Race of Mankind into Being? we shall then find our selves forced to acknowledge the Hand of God in it.

Forasmuch as in the first place, it is certain, that nothing could take a Beginning without a Cause; and, in the next place, it is as certain, that this thing called *Mankind*, could not be the Cause of it self, or produce it self; and then to impute it to Chance, or to imagine that such an excellent Being as Mankind is, wherein there  
is

is so much variety of Parts, and yet order and decency, and, in short, so many instances of admirable art and wisdom in the very compofure of his Body, (setting aside his Mind :) that this, I say, should be the product of blind Chance, is more absurd than either of the former : therefore there must be a God ; for *none but a fool indeed can say, There is no God.*

Now, if we acknowledge a God, who gave beginning to our selves, and to all other things, we must also own him to be Eternal, as being before all things, and the Cause of them ; and as such, he must needs not only have in himself eminently all those Perfections which are to be found in any part of his Workmanship, but be also unlimited in his own Perfections.

And this will inavoidably lead us to the acknowledgment of all, or most of those Attributes which either the Holy Scripture ascribes to him, or which Religion is concerned in, namely, that he is a Free Agent, that he is Omnipotent, that he is infinitely Wise, that he is Just, and that he is Good, as will easily appear in particular.

*First,* He must needs be a Free Agent, that is, such an one as acts not necessarily, or that is bound down by any fatal necessity,

or determined to this or that act, or object, or measure of acting by any thing without him, but wholly follows his own voluntary motion and choice, *the counsel of his own will*. The reason is plain; because he made things when nothing was before, and so there could be nothing to bound, limit, or determine him.

*Secondly*, He must needs be Powerful or Omnipotent, for the same reason, namely, because he gave being and beginning to things that were not at all; for we cannot conceive a greater instance of Power, than to bring Something out of Nothing.

*Thirdly*, He must be Wise, both because we see he hath contrived things according to the rules of exactest Wisdom, insomuch, that the more we understand the Divine Workmanship, the more we admire it; and also, because he hath imprinted some image of his Wisdom upon our selves.

*Fourthly*, We must acknowledge him Just, as well because (by reason of his infinite Power and Wisdom) he can have no little ends to bias him, as because he hath also made an impression of Justice upon our Minds.

*Lastly*, He must needs be Good, not only because he is Wise (as aforesaid) but



but because he is infinitely Happy and Perfect, and so can fear nothing, can envy nothing, can need nothing from any other Being ; but contrariwise, being infinitely full, must have a pleasure to diffuse and communicate himself to them.

§. 3. All these Doctrines concerning the Deity, flow from that one persuasion, that there is a God ; and the influence of every of these upon Religion, is as great and apparent, as the consequence of them from the acknowledgment of such a Being was natural and necessary : so that a Man may with as much reason deny any of the aforesaid Attributes to belong to the Divine Majesty, as (granting them to be in him, or belong to him) avoid the force of them upon his conscience, to encline him to regard this Great God, *i. e.* to be Religious ; which we will again shew particularly.

*First,* If the Divine Majesty be a Free Agent, then it is certain, all the good and all the evil which he doth to us, he doth by choice ; and then we ought to be sensible of our obligations to him for the one, and humble our selves to him under the other. And then also, because we are convinced, *that he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy,* we know there is no trifling  
and

and dallying with such a Deity, but we ought to use all possible means of propitiating him towards our selves.

*Secondly*, For the Divine Omnipotency, the natural consequence of that is, that we fear him, and trust in him: for who is there that thinks of a God that made him out of nothing, and is therefore able to destroy him, and resolve him into nothing again when he pleases, who doth not think it the highest wisdom in the world that he should be subject to him, pay him all possible homage, tremble before him, and also think fit to trust and rely upon his Almighty Power, in all exigencies and difficulties.

*Thirdly*, The Divine Wisdom makes our obligations to Religion yet more strict and close; for it convinces our Reason, that we ought to submit to his Providences, whatsoever they are, and not to dispute his Commands, nor doubt his Promises, but hold him in the highest veneration and admiration that is possible for us to express; to be reverent towards him upon all occasions, to submit our wills to his; and especially in consideration that he must needs see and take notice of all our carriage and behaviour, to live with as much caution in the greatest retirement and privacy, as  
when

when we are sensible that we are upon the greatest Theatre.

*Fourthly*, The apprehension of the Divine Justice and Integrity, not only assures us, that he hates all sin, but that he hath no respect of Persons, but will judge the World in Righteousness; and then, who will grumble at any of his Providences, break any of his Laws, or do any unjust and base action, and that because *it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*, who always can, and in due time will right himself?

*Lastly*, The consideration of God's Goodness, and that he is a Gracious and Benign Majesty, cannot chuse but mightily inflame our hearts with love to him, and provoke us to serve him with all cheerfulness: for who that believes him delighted to communicate himself to the relief of all his Creatures, doth not think of him with pleasure, and comfort himself in him? or who can find in his heart to offend and abuse him, and not rather repent of all his former follies and ingritudes, and resolve to sin no more? For, as the Apostle hath said, *the goodness of God leadeth to repentance*.

So that in this one Principle (the belief that there is a God) we have a large foundation for Religion in general; which I have the rather insisted upon thus particularly,

larly, for the sake of those who are called, or call themselves Theists, (because they pretend to be convinced of no more of the Articles of Religion, but only of this great point, the being of a Deity : ) these Men, I say, if upon that single Principle they do not live religiously, are either Men of no Conscience, and then it will be all one what their Principles are ; or are Men of no Principles at all, *i. e.* are Atheists rather than Theists, forasmuch as by what hath been said, it is apparent how pregnant that one Principle is of Vertue and Piety, if it be sincerely believed, and rightly improved. But so much for that.

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### C H A P. III.

#### *Of the Rewards of Religion in another World.*

LET us now consider the other Principle of Religion, *viz.* That *God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* This (as I intimated before) is properly the motive or inducement to the observance of the Divine Majesty ; for it hath pleased him to conjoin our interest with his own, and

and he hath made the greatest part of our duty towards him to consist in such things as conduce to our own good, as well as to his glory; and to that purpose hath laid the foundation of Religion, by planting in us that principle of Self-love and Self-preservation which is inseparable from our Natures, and by which he works upon us.

Concerning this point therefore of the Rewards of Religion, we will first consider the Evidence of it; and when that is clear, we shall easily, in the second place, be convinced of the Efficacy of it, to the purposes of making Men devout.

The former of the two we will make way to the discovery of, by this train of Discourse.

1. We have shewed already, That there is both Justice and Goodness in the Divine Nature, either of which severally, but most certainly both together in conjunction, afford ground of expectation, that he will make a difference betwixt those that serve him, and those that serve him not. For seeing his Power and Greatness render him a fit Object of Worship, and our dependance upon him as his Creatures, makes homage due from us to him: and seeing by his infinite Wisdom, he must needs be sensible how Men carry themselves towards him; it  
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cannot consist with his Justice to let those escape unpunished, who pay no observance to him ; nor stand with his Goodness, to suffer those to be unrewarded, that serve and honour him.

Indeed, it must be acknowledged, that this consideration of those Attributes will not amount to a proof of Rewards in another World ; because of that other Attribute of his, *viz.* the Divine Liberty or Freedom, upon account of which, he cannot be bound to exercise whatsoever act or instance either of Justice or Goodness is possible ; for that would make him a necessary Agent, (an error which some Men fall into unawares, whilst they are in pursuit of some extreams of Opinions,) it may therefore be consistent enough with those Attributes (barely considered, and looking no farther) that he reward and punish only in this World : but that which follows inevitably, is, that some such thing as Rewards and Punishments there must be upon the account of Mens carriage towards him ; which is all I intend hitherto. But then I subjoin,

2. It is highly reasonable, upon other accounts, to expect greater Rewards of Vertue and Obedience, than what usually befall Men in this World ; as also severer  
Punish-

Punishments of Impiety, and neglect of the Divine Majesty, partly because of the unequal distribution of things in this life, where *the race is not always to the swift, nor the battel to the strong, &c.* but good and bad events happen often-times alike to all; wicked Men are sometimes prosperous, and holy Men unfortunate and miserable: by which intricacy of Divine Providence, the Wisdom of God seems to lead us into an expectation of another World, where amends shall be made for what is amiss here; partly also because the life of Men is so short, and they so quickly go off the stage of this world, that neither the Rewards of Vertue would be considerable, nor the Punishments of Impiety formidable enough, if they were no more than what Men could receive or suffer in this short Pilgrimage; but principally because the good things of this world are so mean and empty and inconsiderable, that they afford no satisfaction to the great Mind of a vertuous Man. Riches, and Honour, and Pleasure, may, perhaps, fill and swell up a narrow, sensual Soul, but a brave Man can by no means be contented with them; and therefore it is manifestly unworthy of the Greatness and Goodness of the Divine Majesty, to give no better Rewards to those  
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that

that love and honour him, than what they are capable of in this Life.

3. There is no impossibility in the thing, that there should be another World besides this, and that we should live in it, either to reap the fruit of our serving of God, or to receive the just reward of our Impiety; and all the Reason of Mankind, nay, all the Wit, Scepticism and Sophistry together, can find no repugnancy and contradiction in it; and therefore the concern of Religion is not inconsiderable. If there were any impossibility in it, it must lie in this, That Men should live again after they are dead. But this is so far from implying a contradiction, that it is not at all difficult to him that believes an Almighty Power, which every one must acknowledge that owns a God: for why is it harder to restore a Man to life again, than to make him at first out of Nothing? So that he relapses into flat Atheism, that denies the possibility of that which we are now making way for the belief of.

4. Nay, I add farther, This thing is so far from being impossible or incredible, that the consideration of the Nature of our Souls renders it very probable, and makes us capable of such a condition; for it is plain, we have that in us, which doth not  
alto-

altogether depend upon our Bodies, but our Bodies upon it ; that which gives life and motion to the Body, but receives neither from it ; that which guides, governs, restrains and contradicts the Body when it pleases, and which can act vigorously when the other is weak and languid ; as we often-times observe the strange efforts of Wit and Reason, when the Body is almost worn out, and at its last gasp. This being of a spiritual nature, hath no contrary principles in its constitution, by the conflict of which it should be brought to dissolution, as the other hath. In a word, the Soul hath life in it self (though not from it self) and therefore cannot perish, unless either it should be supposed to desert it self, or else, that God, by his Omnipotency, should oppress and destroy it ; which last thing there is no reason to suspect, since, from the beginning of the world, till now, he hath not put out of being, any thing that ever he made ; and we see, in all the changes and revolutions of things, the least Atom of Matter is not lost : And can it then seem credible, that a vital Spirit should utterly be extinct and perish, when it leaves the Body, or rather is deserted by it ? And this will be further confirmed, if we add,

5. He

5. He that made us, hath implanted several things upon our Natures which have relation to another Life, and another World, and which make it reasonable for us to expect it accordingly ; such as not only a desire to live, which yet we know we cannot do long here below, but a sollicitude what shall come after, an inquisitiveness and continual thoughtfulness for the future, extending it self infinitely beyond the stage of this short life ; nay, some kind of obscure notion and anticipation of another World, which generally the best of Men are most sensible of ; and usually, the more wise and holy any Men are, the more they are under such apprehensions : and sure it would not consist with the Goodness of God, to permit such Men to be the most deluded, especially he himself would not be guilty of putting a cheat upon them, which notwithstanding must be, if there were nothing at all in it of truth ; forasmuch as this is not the peculiar fancy or opinion either of the sanguine or of the melancholy constitution, but of all the bravest and worthiest Men ; and this is that which principally bears them up in adversity, and fortifies them against Death, and in the approaches of it, sometimes ravishes and transports them.

Above

Above all, there is such a thing as Conscience, which is common both to good and bad, and which cheers and animates the one, whensoever they do vertuously, though no humane eye be witness of the action, and when they expect no benefit of their performance in this World : And on the other side, terrifies and affrights the other, *viz.* wicked Men, though no Man be privy to their misdeeds, and this, as it were, binds them over to answer for them another day. Now all these things being the Hand-writing of our Creator upon our Souls, are more than probable Arguments of another World.

6. God hath declared there shall be such a state. He that created Mankind at first, hath assured them he will revive them after Death, and reward and punish them in another World, proportionably to their carriage towards himself in this. This comes home to the purpose ; whereas all that which hath been said hitherto (how reasonable soever) depends upon the uncertain and fluctuating Discourses of Men, (though it is very true, that where-ever there hath been Wisdom and Vertue in conjunction, they have seldom failed to render this great point competently clear to those  
who

who had no other light.) But some are more stagger'd with a trifling Objection, than convinced by a Demonstration; and others are not able to follow so long a train of Consequences as is necessary to make out so great a Question. But now we come into the Day-light, and have Divine Revelation for our Guide, and God's Veracity for our Assurance.

I confess, I might have fallen upon this way of proof at first, and so have saved all the labour of what I have been saying hitherto, but that I partly thought it useful to shew how far Natural Theology would go in this business; and principally I took this method, to the intent that this great Doctrine of Christianity might not seem strange to any one, but might be the more readily entertained, when it is prefaced to, and usher'd in with so much probability of Humane Reason.

Now, I say, God Almighty hath himself assured us, that *our labour shall not be in vain in the Lord*; that Piety shall not go unrewarded in another World, nor Impiety unpunished: this he hath innumerable times expressly affirmed in the Gospel, and with such circumstances, as may both best assure our Judgments, and awaken our Affections. He hath told us,  
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he will hold a solemn Judgment at the end of the World, at which all Men shall appear and receive their Doom ; he hath declared who shall be the Judge, and confirmed him to be so, by that wonderful instance, of raising him from the Dead. He hath foretold the Circumstances, and the manner of Proceeding at that Great Day ; he hath described ( as well as words could admit it ) the Joy and Glory that holy and good Men shall thenceforth be put into the everlasting possession of, and set out the Torments and Anguish that shall be inflicted upon the Ungodly.

I shall not need to go about to aggrandize these things , since they are so vastly great and concerning, that there is no way to despise them, but by disbelieving them. But what colour or pretence can there be for that, after God hath said it, and sent his Son to declare this great News to the World ?

Will Men be so wretchedly absurd, as to say still, it is impossible that Men should live again after they are once dead ; when there is plain Matter of Fact against this Suggestion, which is beyond all the Arguments in the World ? For was not our Saviour most certainly put to Death ? and did

did he not also exhibit himself alive, afterwards, to the Eyes, and Ears, and very Feeling of his Apostles, and many others ?

Will Men say, Heaven is but a Dream, or a Romantick Fancy ? when there were so many Eye-witnesses of our Saviour's Ascension to Heaven, and that he was alive and in power there : There was that glorious Proof, the descent of the Holy Ghost upon his Apostles, on the famous Day of *Pentecost*, according to his Promise made whilst he was upon Earth.

Will they say, God hath a mind to impose upon Men ? when he hath no Ends to serve by it, when he can compass his Designs without it ; and when he hath it in his power to dissolve a World that would not comply with him, and make another in its stead.

Or, Will they say, that Men impose upon one another, and there was never any such Matters of Fact as we have here supposed ? But why do they not then disbelieve all History, all ancient Records, give the lye to all great Actions, and abrogate all Faith amongst Men ; yea, although there be never so plain, never so numerous, so concurrent, and so disinterested Testimonies ? All this, and more than this,



this, they must do, that deny the Matters of Fact we speak of; and if they do not do so, they must of necessity believe another Life, an Hell, and an Heaven.

And then, if those be believed, Piety will be the best Wisdom, and Religion the greatest Truth ; Sin will then be the greatest Folly ; and trifling with God and Religion, the most dangerous thing imaginable : But that we shall more particularly make out in the next Chapter.

## CHAP. IV.

*Of the great influence and mighty force  
of believing Heaven and Hell, or  
Rewards and Punishments in another  
World.*

**T**Here are a sort of Men, who (being too much in love with this World, to have any great mind to the other) will pretend, that the grounds to believe these things are not sufficient, and that there are, as the case stands, neither Encouragements enough to make a Man Religious, nor Arguments powerful enough

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nough to restrain Vice ; because we are only prest upon by hopes and fears of hereafter, but nothing befalls presently. These Men require, that for the countenance of Religion, there should be a present discrimination between him that serves God, and him that despises him ; that the Sinner should be taken and executed in the very fact, and the good Man crowned upon the spot ; or at least, they think it not an unreasonable Demand, that if it be the Will of God, that evil Men should be reprieved, and good Men kept in suspense till another World ; yet he should give Mankind a view of what shall befall hereafter, that they might have a sight of Heaven and Hell, and so dispose themselves accordingly.

The former part of this fancy was taken notice of by *Solomon, Eccles. viii. 11. Because sentence against an evil work is not speedily executed, therefore the heart of man is fully set to do wickedly.* The other part of it is much like that of the forlorn Wretch in the Gospel, *Luke xvi. 30.* who thought it reasonable to ask, that one might be sent from the dead, to convince his Relations of the reality of another World.

But all these Men, as they do too palpably betray they have no love to Religion,  
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nor no desire it should be true ; so they evidently discover, that they neither understand what satisfaction is fit for God to give in these matters, or for Man to require ; nor do they consider what the nature of Vertue and Religion will admit of, no, nor do they understand themselves so well, as to know what motives will work upon Men ; nor, lastly have they applied their minds to take a just estimate of the value and efficacy of these motives of hopes and fear which it pleases God to set before them.

*First*, They do not consider what satisfaction in these matters it is fit for God to afford, or for Men to require. It is not reasonable that the Great God should gratifie the humour and curiosity of his Creatures, nor that they should peremptorily prescribe to Him. It is fit, indeed, for his Goodness to give us Assurance in these important Affairs : but he thinks good to satisfy our Reasons, and we will have our Senses convinced ; which is as much as to say, we will not believe God, but our own Eyes.

*Secondly*, They do not consider what Evidence the nature of Vertue and Piety will admit of, that require such Inducements as may encourage Good, and dis-

courage Evil ; such as may provoke us to chuse the one, and to avoid the other ; not such as will over-bear our choice, and necessarily determine us. Religion requires such Arguments as may improve Humane Nature, not supersede or destroy it ; and it is best promoted by such a state of things as wherein a Man conflicts with some Difficulties, exercises Self-denial, Modesty, Humility, and Trust in God. It consists in a prudent estimate of all Circumstances, a Discretion and Judgment to value things in reversion, and is worth nothing, if there be no such ingredients in it as Faith, and Patience, and a vertuous Choice ; all which there is no room for, if the Rewards of it were wholly present, or exposed to our senses.

*Thirdly*, Nor do the Men that talk at this rate, so much as understand themselves and their own hearts so well, as to know what will be sufficient to prevail with them : they fantasie, if they had the good luck to be Spectators of a Miracle actually wrought, it would unquestionably lead them to assent : And yet we see those that were Eye-witnesses of abundance of such, were never the better for them. They imagine, that if they had seen the passages of our Saviour's Life, Death and Resur-

Resurrection, they should not have been incredulous ; yet there were multitudes that all those things wrought nothing upon. And assuredly, as *Abraham* told the Rich Man in the last mentioned passage of Saint *Luke*, *If men hear not Moses and the prophets, i. e.* If they do not believe upon such satisfaction as God gives them, neither will they believe upon such other as their curiosity or capricious humour demands, no, *not if one rose from the dead* ; for the same unwillingness which is in them to believe that Evidence which they have, will follow them still ; and the same captious temper will except against their own Demands, and find Evasions, if their very Eyes were gratified : for Faith cannot be extorted from Men, nor can any thing make him believe, that hath not a mind to it.

*Lastly*, Nor do they understand the force and efficacy of these inducements of Hope and Fear which God hath set before us ; which is the thing I principally consider in this place. If, indeed, the Objects of these passions, or the Things expected in another World, were mean and inconsiderable, there were then no reason to expect that they should have any great force upon the minds of Men, to prevail with

them to despise a present World, for the attainment of Heaven. Or (supposing the Objects as great as we can) if the grounds of our Hopes and Fear were childish and vain, *i. e.* our Fears were panick and unaccountable, and our Hopes mere sanguine Dreams, and romantick Fancies; then it were justly to be expected, that if Almighty God would oblige us to Religion, he should give us better Evidence. But if both the things to be fear'd or expected in another World are vastly great and concerning, if they prove to be real, and also the Evidence or Assurance of their Reality be reasonable too; then it is no less than madness to run the hazard of them, by neglect of Religion, whilst we fondly cavil to have our humour satisfied.

Now, that these Hopes and Fears of Rewards and Punishments in another World are just and reasonable, and Indeed as well grounded as Hopes and Fears can or ought to be, I have shewn already; forasmuch as if there were more Evidence than there is, they would cease to be Hopes and Fears, and would be the Apprehensions of Sense. And that the things thus hoped for and feared, or expected, are of so unspeakable moment, as that, if  
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the Evidence for them were less than it is, it would be all the wisdom in the world not to run the hazard of them, will easily appear by this short and faint representation.

That which good Men hope for, and that which God Almighty promises them in the other World, is no less than to be raised up again from the Dead, and to live for ever and ever, without any pain, sickness, want or infirmity of Body; with Minds secure from danger, free from temptation, void of care, incapable of fear, error or disorder, together with serenity of Spirit, peace of Conscience, unspeakable Joy, in the presence of the Divine Majesty, and the Blessed Jesus, and in the Society of glorious Angels, and good Men made perfect, where also they shall partake of a felicity as great as Divine Goodness could design, as his Wisdom could contrive, and his Power effect for their entertainment.

On the other side, that which God, in the Holy Scripture, gives wicked Men ground to expect and fear, is, that they also shall be raised up again from the grave, and then be exposed openly before all the World, their Hypocrisy, Lewdness, Folly and Ingratitude being proved

upon them ; and they thereupon be condemn'd to utter Darkneſs, to be for ever abandoned of God and good Men, and to become the Company indeed, but the ſport and triumph, of infernal Spirits, who ſhall make them the ſubjects of their malice and tyranny, and there live under the perpetual anguiſh of their own Conſciences ; and, in ſhort, full of the wrath of the Almighty, which, like Fire and Brimſtone, ſhall prey upon them and burn them, without remedy, or remiſſion of torment.

Who now can doubt whether theſe things are of mighty influence upon the Hearts and Conſciences of Men, to encline them to Religion ? For can any Man be ſo void of all manly Diſcretion, as to deſpiſe ſuch an Happineſs as is promiſed to good Men ? or ſo deſtitute of all Senſe, as to be content to dwell with Everlaſting Burnings, which will be the portion of wicked Men ?

No wonder therefore if *Felix* (a looſe and debauched Man) trembled when Saint *Paul* preached to him of *righteouſneſs, temperance, and judgment to come*, Act.xxiv.25. And it would be ſtrange and prodigious Fool-hardineſs, if any Man that lives without regard of God and Religion, ſhould  
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at any time happen to consider these things, and should not find a Convulsion within himself, like that of *Belshazar*, Dan. v. 6. when he saw *the fingers of an hand-writing upon the wall against him*; of whom the Text tells us, that thereupon *his countenance was changed, his thoughts troubled him, the joints of his loins were loosed, and his knees smote one against the other.*

For certainly, the least impression which the consideration of these things can make upon a Man, is to render Sin very uneasy to him, and to spoil his greatest Jollities. Forasmuch as every time he knowingly or wilfully commits it, he not only *judges himself unworthy of eternal life*, but defies God Almighty, and *treasures up against himself wrath against the day of wrath.* And the reflection on this, must needs make the prospect of Death very terrible to him, when these things shall come into Plea, and when what before was only feared, must now be felt and undergone; and without a perpetual debauch, it will be hardly possible for him to avoid thinking of this unpleasant Subject; since while he hath his senses about him he cannot but take notice how daily that unacceptable Guest makes his approaches towards him.

And if Death be terrible to a Man, it is certain thenceforward Life cannot be very comfortable ; for every Accident will discompose him, every Disease is dreaded by him, as the Harbinger of that King of Terrors ; his Spirits are convulsed, his Joys are blasted, his Diversions afford him no relief ; he sees reason to be afraid of every thing, and is tempted basely to flatter and humour every Man, because every body hath it in his power to bring upon him the summ of all Calamities, that is, to kill him.

Against all this there is no Protection, no Sanctuary but in Religion ; if the Sinner flee not to that, he perishes, and, which is worse, feels himself tormented before the time : this therefore he is mightily prest to do, by the Terrors of another World. And although it is true, that it is not in the nature of Fear (even of Hell it self) to make a Man generously good, because it only cramps his powers, and is not a principle of action, yet it is an instrument of caution, and if it be attended to, will make him less evil, where-in the first work of Religion, namely, Reformation, begins.

And then, so long as there is Hope also in the other Scale, it may happily not end there.

there. The Apostle hath told us, *the law* (which was a Ministry of Fear and Death) *made nothing perfect; but the bringing in of a better hope did, by the which we draw nigh to God,* Heb. vii. 19.

For the hopes of that unspeakable Felicity and Glory, which, as I shewed before, doth await all good Men in another World, is able to make a Man forget flesh and infirmity, to despise danger and difficulty, and to raise him above himself, 2 Pet. i. 4. Those great and precious Promises which are propounded to us by the Gospel, do *make a man partaker of a Divine Nature.* For great Hopes raise brave Spirits, and effect Wonders.

The mere persuasion, that I have an immortal Soul, is of mighty efficacy to make me value my self more than to think my self made to eat and drink; and will not permit me to drown this divine Particle in drink and debauches, nor exert it only in folly and buffoonry, but will prompt me to cultivate this immortal Part, to furnish it with Wisdom and Knowledge, that I may enjoy it the better in another World; to subdue my sensual inclinations, that I may learn betimes to live like an Angel, and to castigate my anger and wrath, and fury and malice, those unsociable vices,

vices, that I may be fit for that peaceable Conversation, and everlasting Friendship in Heaven.

The thoughts of living for ever, will not suffer a Man to be fond of the present life, but will inable him to banish all servile fear, to defie danger, to flatter no body's follies, to comply with no body's vices, but to dare to be good, in spite of an evil Age, and bad Examples. For what should cow him that hath this Armour of Proof, and is every way invulnerable?

The contemplation of those inestimable good things laid up for good Men in Heaven, is not only able to restrain Sensuality, Rapine, Injustice, Treachery; but to make Self-denial very easie, and to place a Man so high above the Vanities of this World, that he shall only look down upon the Things themselves with contempt and scorn, and upon the Men that doat upon them with wonder and pity.

He that hath hopes given him, of seeing and enjoying the blessed Jesus in Heaven, will, according to the Apostle St. *John*, 1 Epist. iii. 3. find himself powerfully obliged to purifie himself as he is pure.

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And, to say no more, He that believes *that God is, and that he is such a Rewarder of those that diligently seek him*, must needs find great inducements to seek and serve him accordingly.

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## C H A P. V.

*What particular Religion we should apply our selves to.*

**H**AVING in the Premisses discovered the Ground and Foundation of Religion in general, and thereby made it appear to be so highly reasonable, that it is every Man's Wisdom and Interest to comply with it : We now proceed to enquire, what Mode or Profession of Religion in special he ought to apply himself to, who is convinced of the necessity of it in the general.

And this is the rather to be done, because some Men make the variety of Religions which they observe in the World, an argument against them all ; and because there are so many Forms of it, that they cannot easily resolve which to addict themselves

selves to, these Men (as they think very wisely) pitch upon none, but fairly stand Neuters.

Now, for prevention of this Mischief, as well as to make way for the Resolution of the great Question before us, let us consider these two things: First, *That it is not* only an impious, but a very foolish and frantick resolution, to stand off from all Religion, upon pretence that there are Differences and Disputes about it. For,

1. Men will not be content to go by that Rule in other cases; no Man will conclude there is no such thing as *Meum* and *Tuum*, or Right and Wrong, in their Civil Interests, because they observe Lawyers to wrangle at the Barr, or to give different Opinions in particular Cases; nor because Physicians often disagree in their Judgments of Diseases, will any discreet Man refuse their assistance, and resolve to let his Disease take its course: This Objection therefore of sceptical Men, is but a mere Pretence, made use of to countenance their averſation to Religion, and not a real Maxim of Reason with them.

2. The ground of this Objection is foolishly or maliciously represented; for it is plain, that the main things of Religion are very little or nothing in dispute,  
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but are confessed and agreed in by all ; or if there be some Points of moment disputed, they are generally such as are speculative, not matters of practice. For who disputes whether God should be worshipped ? whether a Man should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world ? in such things as these, all discreet and well-disposed Men agree. Let the sceptical Person therefore agree to these two, and practise them ; or else let him be so ingenuous as to acknowledge, it is only his unwillingness to comply with the Rules of a good Life, which makes him pretend to stumble at Disputes.

3. It is to be considered, that even those who differ and dispute in several points, agree notwithstanding in this, That it is the wisest and safest course to come to a Resolution in Religion ; forasmuch as particular Disputes about it, prove undeniably this in the general, that by confession of all Parties, there is great moment in it ; because there could be no reason why either the one side or the other should trouble themselves, and raise such heats about it, but that both are satisfied of the great consequence of the subject of the Question, and the consideration of that is it which makes them be  
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so nice, curious and critical, about the very punctilio's of it. But,

Fourthly and lastly, It is especially to be considered, that he that stands neutral, and holds off from all Religion, upon pretence of the danger of mistake, upon account of the great variety of Persuasions, runs into the most fatal mistake of all, and is of all men in the most desperate condition; for whatsoever becomes of other men, under a mistaken zeal, or a false opinion, he is certainly a lost Man, who hath no Zeal or Religion at all. For though it be certain, all Persuasions cannot be right, and therefore some must miscarry; yet so long as there is a real Foundation for Religion in general, (as we have seen,) it is evident, the Sceptist cannot be saved (whoever be damned) who entertains no Persuasion at all. Therefore as it is better uncertainly to err, than certainly to perish; so it must needs be a wiser course to determine our selves some way, notwithstanding the Disputes, than gravely to doubt our selves into Hell, by a fantastical neutrality.

But then, *Secondly*, As it is a very dangerous and absurd resolution, to be of no Religion, for fear we should mistake the right; it is not much better, on the other  
side,



side, to be such *Latitudinarians*, as to think it indifferent what Religion a Man be of, so long as he is zealous and devout in his way, unless we could be assured, that the *broad way* was the way to Heaven, which is most certainly false.

I confess, it is a very bad Religion, indeed, which is not better than none at all, as the faintest Hopes are better than utter Desperation. And it is undoubtedly true, that without Fervour and Devotion in the prosecution of a Man's Persuasion, no Religion, be it never so good and orthodox, will signify any thing. It is true also, that a Man of a devout temper hath the ground of Piety, and a foundation for good Institution to work upon: yet notwithstanding, Religion speaks something more than to be in earnest, and Piety requires more than a good Intention. For unless that honest temper be cultivated and improved, it will bring forth nothing but wild fruit; that Zeal must be governed and conducted by good Principles, or it will betray a Man to Presumption, to Superstition, and to a thousand Irregularities.

We are set to run a race towards Heaven; but in that case it is not only speed, but the keeping the exact course withal,

withal, that entitles to the Reward. He that runs wrong, the more haste he makes, the worse is his speed ; for he hath the more to undo again.

Nor is this any reflection upon the Divine Majesty, who is infinitely good, and consequently very pitiful to the well-meant Errors of Mankind ; for it must be considered, that he is Wise, and Great, and Just also ; not so soft and fond, as to be pleased with whatsoever is well meant towards him, or to be contented with whatever Men fancy. No, he hath a Mind and Will of his own, and requires and expects those be complied withal by such as he rewards with Eternal Life.

Therefore the Question which we are now upon is very serious and necessary, *viz.* how amidst such variety of Persuasions or Forms of Religion as are in the World, a Man may make a right choice, and know which of them he ought in particular to determine himself upon.

But the assailing of it cannot be difficult, forasmuch as if God will be served in his own way, it is evident, that he must have taken some course or other for the discovery and interpreting of his Mind and Will to the Sons of Men, to the intent that they may have a rule to govern their Devotions by.

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Now, it is plain, beyond dispute, that there are three and but three things which can with any colour of probability pretend to give us aim in this case, *viz.* Natural Light, the Spirit, or the Holy Scriptures ; and therefore all the difficulty comes to this point, which of these three we are to follow and govern our selves by.

As for the first of the three, namely, the Light of Nature, or Natural Reason ; it is true, that this is able, in some measure, to discover to us that there is a God, and to assure us also of some of his Attributes and Perfections, so as to lay a general Foundation of Religion (as we have briefly shewed already,) but it can neither discover all the Divine Perfections, because he is Infinite, and beyond our comprehension, nor much less penetrate the depths of his Counsels, or the secrets of his Will and Pleasure, because (as we also noted before) he is a Free Agent, and hath no necessary measures, but freely chuses as it pleases him.

And therefore, *as no man knows the mind of a man, but the spirit of a man which is in him ;* so much less can any Man know the Mind of God, till he be pleased to reveal it. Now the design of Religion being to please and propitiate the Divine Majesty

jesty to us, it is impossible any Man should pretend to know what will fully do that by Natural Reason. Consequently, not only the old Philosophers, but the modern Theists, and that Sect of Men called *Quakers*, who pretend to attain Happiness, by the Natural Notions of God, or the Light within them, must miserably be bewildered, whilst they follow so imperfect and uncertain a Guide.

As for the Second, namely, a Private Spirit, there is no doubt but that the Divine Majesty could (if he had pleased) have conducted Men by immediate Revelation, and, as it were, led them by his own immediate Hand, from time to time, dictating his own Will to their Minds; and there is as little reason to question, but that sometimes, in extraordinary cases, he hath done so in former times: but that this should be his ordinary and standing course, is not reasonable to think; not only because we cannot now observe, that the best of Men either have experience of, or so much as pretend to any such thing, but because, in the first place, it is evident, that such immediate Revelation could be of no further use than to that particular Person to whom it was made, in regard it would be like  
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the white stone, *Rev. ii. 17. which no man knows what is written upon it, but he that receives it*; and, secondly, because the very Person himself that should pretend to it, could not secure himself from illusion, but might easily mistake the Idols of his own Fancy, or the very Illusions of the Devil, for the Dictates of the Divine Spirit (as we find by sad experience that many have done) unless there were withal a constant succession of Miracles, to assure their Minds that it was the Divine Impression: *Therefore*, forasmuch as those who pretend to the Spirit, can give no assurance of it, and Natural Reason cannot pretend to discover sufficiently the Divine Will; it remains, that only the Holy Scripture is that which must be our Guide in the way to please God, and attain the Salvation expected in another World.

The Holy Scripture then is that provision God hath thought fit to make for our Weakness and Ignorance. This is the Transcript of the Divine Mind, a Light that shineth in Darkness, and by which Divine Wisdom designed to guide us through all the maze of Disputes, and to resolve us of all the important Questions that concern our Eternal Interest; and this is that which he hath so fitted to our use,

use, that whosoever consults it with a Mind free from prejudices and anticipation, he shall not miss his way to Heaven.

Nor shall such a Man as is disposed to receive the Kingdom of God as a little Child, *i. e.* comes with a mind willing to learn and be convinced, and with that temper applies himself to the Holy Scripture, need either the pretended Infallibility of a Pope, or the Authority of a Church to interpret it to him : For it is certain, God is as able to express his Mind to us, as either of these are, whensoever he thought fit to do so : and where he resolved to be obscure, it is not to any purpose to consult them in the case, who are no more privy to his secret Counsels, than we our selves are. And it is not consistent either with the Goodness or Wisdom of God, to order matters so, that he should be betrayed to any capital error (so as to endanger his Salvation) who applies himself to the holy Scripture, and comes qualified with an honest Heart, and in the use of such ordinary means as are afforded for the understanding of them.

It is indeed not impossible, but that such a Man, notwithstanding both the perfection and perspicuity of this Rule, may err in some smaller matters ; but there is

no reason to fear they should be either such as will abuse him in the great Doctrines of Faith, or the Rules of a good Life ; he can neither mistake the Object of his Worship, nor the manner of it, nor endanger the Glory of God, or his own Salvation. For this will direct him to a Religion plain and easie, humble and peaceable, reasonable and hearty ; a Religion that neither imposes an implicit Faith, nor countenances a bold Presumption, that will make Men Devout without Superstition, and Holy without Arrogance, or pretending to merit at God's hands. In a word, The Holy Scripture impartially consulted, will bring us to a Religion that shall neither consist of Speculations, and be opinionative and fanatical on the one side, nor made up of external shew and pomp, as that of the Church of *Rome*, on the other side, but such as that of the Church of *England*, which manifestly avoids both extreams.

CHAP.

## C H A P. VI.

*More particular Directions for the settling  
a Man's Mind in Religion.*

**A**Lthough it be never so certain, that the Holy Scripture was both composed and preserved by the Providence of God, for Mens Guidance in the Way to Heaven ; and notwithstanding its great perspicuity and sufficiency in that case ; yet (as I intimated before) prejudice of Mind is able to defeat the ends of it : therefore, for the removal of that, it will be of great use, that the following Particulars be considered.

*First*, He that would make a right use of the Holy Scripture, and thereby discover the true Lineaments of Religion, let him make enquiry after the most ancient and the most Catholick Religion, and not indulge his Curiosity so as to be taken either with novelty or singularity ; for each of those will lead him aside, both from the Truth of Religion in general, and from the Christian Religion in particular.

As for the former of these notes of Religion, *viz.* Antiquity, the oldest Religion  
must



must needs be as much the truer, as God is before the Devil ; therefore the Prophet *Jeremiah*, chap. vi. 16. directs the People to enquire for the good old way, and walk therein, and they should find rest to their souls ; and for Christianity in particular : forasmuch as that depends upon Divine Revelation, it is impossible that after-Ages should add any thing to it, or make improvement of it, without new Revelation. Whilst God is of the same mind, Heaven of the same nature, and the Gospel of the same tenor, there can be no new Christianity.

Therefore, let all new Lights go for *Ignes Fatui*, and mere Meteors, that serve to no purpose but to bewilder Men. He that seeks for true Christianity, let him neither content himself to look back to Forty one, or the last Age, as some do, nor Five hundred Years backward to a dark Age, as others ; but let him enquire for a Religion as old as Gospel, and observe in what Rules it was delivered, and in what Examples it first shewed it self in the World.

As for the other note of Religion, viz. Universality ; it is certain, the True Religion is the most truly Catholick. For it is evident, that our Saviour intended but one Church, and one Religion, in all the World ;

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and to that purpose, he instituted Christianity in such sort, that it should agree with all Times and Ages, fit all Countries and Climates, suit all Constitutions and Conditions of Men, and subsist under whatsoever Form of Government or Civil Polity it should meet with.

Those therefore who model Religion according to the peculiar fashion of some one Country, or frame a notion of it which requires a certain complexion and temper of Body ; (as for instance, that make some austerities essential to it, which all cannot comply with,) or that describe a Religion for the Cloyster, and not adequate to common Life ; or that model it so, as that it must have the Civil Government submitted to it, or it cannot subsist ; or, in a word, that confine it to narrow bounds, or canton it into separate Parties : none of these understand the true Genius of Christianity, nor take the measures of Religion from the holy Scripture.

*Secondly,* He that would make a right choice of his Religion, must not take it upon publick Faith, or be determined by common Fame, or so much as regard the loud Shouts and Acclamations of the Vulgar. For they are generally sworn Enemies to sober Reason, as being moved more  
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by heat than light, and governed by sense and fancy, and consequently cannot entertain any great esteem for a modest, sedate, manly and rational Religion, but, on the contrary, infinitely doat upon all the tricks of Superstition and Enthusiasm ; and those two do so wholly govern them, that they receive no impression of Religion, where one or other of them doth not strike their Imaginations.

As for Superstition, the wonderful efficacy of that upon common minds, is so notorious, that nothing can be more. If they see a Man so extremely scrupulous, that he finds (as we say) a *Knot in a Bull-rush* ; so squeamish and strait-laced, that he becomes a burden to himself, and all about him ; so infinitely full of doubts, and fears, and jealousies, that he scandalizes Religion by his impertinency, and renders God Almighty a very unbenign and severe Majesty : such a Man, notwithstanding, is apt to be cried up as a great Saint, although in greater matters, perhaps, he gives himself more liberty than other Men.

Or if they observe a Man pretend to great austerity and mortification, by the carelessness of his Habit, dejectedness of his Countenance, or other peculiarity of his Garb, as wearing an Hair Shirt, or girt

with a Rope, especially if he also macerate himself with Fasting, or whip himself till the blood comes, or use any such severity towards himself; they are strangely affected with this pageant of Piety, and these things alone are security enough to them, that he is an holy Man, and of the best Religion.

Thus, no doubt, the Priests of *Baal*, who (as we read, 1 *King*. xviii. 26.) prayed from Morning to Mid-day, made horrible Out-cries, and used antick Postures, and, amongst the rest, in a blind Zeal, cut themselves with Knives and Lancets, had a mighty veneration amongst the Rabble of superstitious *Israelites*, insomuch that the Prophet *Elijah*, with all the holiness of his life, and very great austerity of conversation too, was not able to bear up with them.

And thus the *Scribes* and *Pharisees*, in our Saviour's time, what by their demure and mortified Looks, disfigured Faces, and outward appearance of Sanctimony; what by their broad Phylacteries, and Fringes of their Garments, beset with sharp Thorns to prick and vex them; what with long Prayers, and frequent Fastings, and such other Artifices, they so led the People by the Nose, that all the Wisdom, Temper, Goodness, nay, Miracles of our Saviour,

viour, were scarce sufficient to procure their attention to him.

And thus it will be also with Enthusiasm, that raises the Admiration, and captivates the Minds of the generality, as much or more than Superstition. If a Man pretend to the Spirit, and to extraordinary Communications from the Divine Majesty ; if he now and then either feel or can counterfeit Raptures and Transports, so that by turns he shall be sometimes, as it were, snatched up to the third Heaven, and at another time be cast down to Hell ; and if in these fits he can talk Non-sence confidently, can make vehement Harangues against Pride, Formality, or Superstition ; if he make shew of extraordinary Zeal and Devotion, and have the pride or insolency to speak ill of his Betters, to slight all ordinary Forms, and censure the Government ; if he have either an horrible Voice, or an oily melting Tone, an artificial Countenance, a peculiar motion of his Eyes, or especially hath the trick to resemble an Epilepsy in all this Legerdemain, then when he speaks evil of Dignities, he shall be thought to have the zeal and spirit of *Elias*, but unquestionably the spirit of God is in him, and he is admired, if not adored, by inconsiderate People : when, in the mean time, sound Do-

ctrine, sober Reason, wise Conversation, and grave Piety, shall signifie nothing but form and carnality with them.

For (as I intimated before) such things as I last named, commend themselves only to a sedate Mind, and a considerative Temper; but the other bear strongly upon the senses and the fancies of Men, and so carry away the Vulgar.

He therefore that would not have his devout Intention abused, must not suffer the Multitude to chuse his Religion for him, nor take it upon trust from publick fame and noise; for if he decide this case by the poll, he shall be sure to have shadow for substance, and either embrace a Religion made up of paint and varnish, or else one animated only by a spirit of Enthusiasm.

*Thirdly*, He that would make a right choice in Religion, and is content to follow the measures of the holy Scripture therein, must resolve with himself not to seek for, or pitch upon such a way as will put him to the least pains, and give him the least trouble; but be willing to deny himself, and to conflict with any difficulty, that he may save his Soul; for pretended easie Religions are like Mountebanks Cures, deceitful and palliative.

Some Men have the folly to persuade themselves, that a Religion consisting of meer Faith, without the trouble of a good Life, will serve the turn ; nay, that to be of a peculiar Party, Sect or Church, will be sufficient : But then it is strange our Saviour should bid us *strive to enter in at the straight gate* ; for it would be a wonder if any should miss of Heaven upon these terms ; or if any be so sottish, they deserve to perish without pity.

Others there are that entertain a conceit of getting to Heaven by the Merits of other Men, as by purchasing an Indulgence, or by hiring a Priest to say Prayers for the Man when he is dead, that would not be at the trouble to pray for himself whilst he was alive ; or by getting a plenary Absolution of all his Sins at the last gasp, or some other such voluptuous and compendious ways of Salvation.

He that seeks out such Expedients as these, argues that he hath some little love to himself, so far as to be loth to be damned, but that he hath none at all towards God or Vertue ; and, indeed demonstrates, that he hath not so much as any worthy notion of God, or apprehension of the nature of the Happiness of the other World : nay, he gives evidence, that

he is as much in love with his sins as with himself, and would have both saved together.

St. Paul assures us, 2 Cor. v. 10. that when we shall appear at the Judgment-seat of Christ, we shall receive our Doom, *according to the things done in the body, whether good or evil*: not according to what shall be done for us when we are out of the Body, much less according to what others have either officiously or mercenarily performed for us. All such Methods are Cheats, the artifices of Hypocrisie, and constitute only a Religion for an Epicure, but are as far, as Hell is from Heaven, from the Institutions of the Scripture.

It is true, our Saviour saith, *his yoke is easie, and his burthen light*; but that is spoken either comparatively to the burden of the Mosaick Law, especially considered with the additional Impositions of the Scribes and Pharisees, who, as he tells us, *laid heavy burdens upon others, but would not buckle under them themselves*; or with respect to the great assistance and mighty encouragement which those Men shall meet with that apply themselves in earnest to Christianity. For certainly, if there had been no considerable difficulty in the Christian Religion, the first Lesson of it would  
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not have been, that a Man *must deny himself*. Nor would our Saviour have required us, that if *our right eye or right hand offend us, we must pluck out the one, and cut off the other*, that we may enter into Life.

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## C H A P. VII.

*Cautions against some Opinions which are Hindrances both of an Holy and of a Comfortable Life.*

**W**Hen a Man hath settled his Principles, and made a good choice of his profession of Religion, he is then in a fair way towards an Holy and a Comfortable Life : yet there are several vulgar Opinions, which, if they be not carefully avoided, will have an unhappy influence upon both, and therefore it is expedient he should be caution'd against them, especially such as those whereof I will here give a Catalogue, in the Particulars following.

To which I will premise this in the general, That although some of the Opinions that shall be mentioned, may seem only

meer Speculations, in the first view of them, and perhaps may go no farther with some Persons, whose singular probity and sincerity of heart may antidote them against the malignity of such Tenets, yet in their own nature, and the genuine consequences of them, they are very dangerous, as shall now be made appear in particular.

I. Therefore, let him that would make a due improvement of the Principles of Christianity, take care of allowing himself to pry too curiously into the secret Counsels of God, or of marshalling too confidently the Decrees of Election and Reprobation, and especially of arguing presumptuously concerning his own or other Mens Salvation or Damnation from them.

There is no question with me, but that God Almighty foreknew, from all Eternity, whatsoever should come to pass in after-Times; and let it be taken for granted also, that from the same Eternity he decreed with himself whatsoever he would afterwards effect or permit: nay, let us more-over suppose he hath expressly determined with himself who shall be saved, and who shall be damned, and that so peremptorily, that only they shall be saved whom he hath so decreed to save, and those shall

shall certainly be damned whom he hath pass'd such a Decree upon. But what then? the proper and only reasonable use we can make of these Suppositions, is to admire the Divine Eternity, Sovereignty, Power and Omniscience: here is neither Matter for our Curiosity nor for our Reason to descant upon; not for our Curiosity, since it is plainly impossible to know what the particular import of those Decrees is, or whom they concern; and less for our Reason, since if we will argue any thing hence, it must be no better than deducing Conclusions from unknown Premisses.

The very prying into these Cabinet-Counsels (besides the folly and immodesty of it) tends to very ill purposes; for it certainly either blows Men up with Presumption, or casts them headlong into Desperation. The Sanguine, and Confident, and Self-applauding, are filled with vain Hopes, by these Speculations; and the Modest, Melancholy and Despondent Tempers, are enclined to despair by them.

But the arguing and drawing consequences of Salvation or Damnation from thence, contradicts the design of the whole Scripture, which charges us *to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling*, and  
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to use *diligence to make our calling and election sure* : Nay, it turns into ridicule all the Exhortations, Threatnings and Promises of the Gospel. For to what purpose doth God persuade us, when he hath irrevocably determined our fate with himself? It discourages all use of means, and all comfort in so doing, since it will be labour in vain : it baffles Conscience, whensoever it either checks us for sin, or would comfort us for doing vertuously ; for what matter is it what Conscience saith, when God hath decreed ? it renders the solemnity of the great Day of Judgment a meer piece of empty pomp and pageantry, seeing Mens Cases are all decided before-hand ; nay, it makes the very Coming of our Saviour, his Life, Death, Propitiation and Intercession, to be illusory and insignificant things ; forasmuch as upon this supposition, Men are saved or damned antecedently to his undertaking.

Now if after all this, any Man will be so desperately absurd and fool-hardy, as to say nevertheless God's Decrees are irrevocable, and therefore the matter of fact is true, that if I be decreed to Salvation, I shall then be saved without more ado ; and if I be decreed to be damned, I must perish, and there will be no help for it ;  
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it will be in vain to use means, seeing I shall but strive against the stream ; my Doom is past, and I may bewail my hard fortune, but cannot reverse it. I would only further ask such a Man this plain Question, *viz.* How he came to persuade himself that God Almighty hath decreed to save and damn Men, right or wrong, (as we say,) *i. e.* whether they repent and believe in Christ Jesus or no ? Forasmuch as it is evident, that he that harbours such an opinion of the Divine Majesty, contradicts the very Notion of a God, and represents him to be the worst and most hateful Being imaginable ; a Being that hath only Power and Will, but hath neither Love nor Hatred, neither Wisdom, Justice nor Goodness in him at all ; that hath no esteem for Faith, Vertue or Piety, no sense of Gratitude and Ingenuity, nor any averſation to baseness and Villany ; but as if he were an unmoved, rigid Idol, is inflexible by any Repentance, Prayers, Tears, Addresses and Importunities, and insensible of, and unprovoked by all the Affronts and Insolencies that can be done to him : To be sure, he that can think thus of God, will easily believe him to have set a mean value upon the Blood of his only Son ; forasmuch as he hath given him up to  
Death,

Death, to no purpose, upon the aforesaid supposition. Now, unless all this be true, (which is impossible,) there can be no colour nor foundation for such an horrid and barbarous opinion.

And if this be false, as most certainly it is, then we shall easily be led into this Scriptural Hypothesis of the Divine Decrees, *viz.* That as he decreed, from all Eternity, to send his Son to be the Saviour of the World ; so he then also determined, That as many as should believe on him, should be saved ; and such as did not so, should be damned. And then, what if we find it to follow, from the nature of God's Omniscience, that he must foreknow the individual Persons that shall be saved or damned ; or, from the nature of his Determinations, that only such and no other can be saved, namely, those he hath decreed to it ; yet then it will be evidently to no purpose to gaze up to God's Decrees : for then whatever hath been written in the Archives of Heaven, it is certain it cannot contradict this, That if I believe and repent, and become a good and holy Man, I shall be saved, or otherwise I shall be damned ; and then all is plain before me : for in this case I have nothing further to do, but to make use of the means of Grace  
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which God affords me, and to look into my own heart and life for my Evidences of Heaven.

Thus, as the wise *Persian*, who sooner found the Sun to be upon the Horizon, by turning himself towards the Western Hills, than he that fixing his Eyes upon the East, expected to see the Sun it self; so we shall sooner find the beams of Divine Favour in the reverse and reflexion of them upon our own Souls, than by a presumptuous prying into his secret Purposes.

And the consideration of this truth, will engage Men in all care and caution, in all diligence and humility, in the use of means, till they gradually improve into a state of holiness and comfort here, and to assurance of the Kingdom of Heaven hereafter.

And this is the course which the Apostle leads us to, *2 Tim. ii. 19. The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth who are his. And let him that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity.* As if he had said, " It is true, indeed, God " knows, from Eternity, whom he intends " to save, and all such shall eventually be " saved, and none else; but our hope and " comfort cannot be built upon unknown " Principles, such as only are recorded in " Heaven, but upon the counterpart of an " holy

“ holy life, or a conformity to those conditions which God hath expressed in his Gospel, as a Copy from the Original kept in his own bosom.

2. The next dangerous Mistake which we ought carefully to avoid, is, concerning the Grace and holy Spirit of God. When Men unreasonably expect that God should do all for them in the business of their Salvation, without their own endeavours, upon pretence that we can do nothing our selves, and therefore it is in vain to go about it ; our part is only to wait God's time of working ; and when his holy Spirit moves, the business will be done without more ado, but in the mean time all our diligence is discharged as impertinent, and even our Prayers too ( if this Doctrine be consistent with it self : ) for, according to this Opinion, if ever Men come to Heaven, they must be dragged thither by Omnipotency, (as the Disciples of *Mahomet* expect to be, by the Hair of their Heads.)

Now though it be undoubtedly true, that all the good that is in us, is owing to *the Father of lights, from whom every good and perfect gift cometh*, forasmuch as he *worketh in us both to will and to do* ; and therefore we can never magnifie Grace enough, nor attribute too much to the holy Spirit,



Spirit, without making Machines of our selves, and Nonsense of the Gospel : ) yet it is as sure, on the other hand, that God needs not that we should tell a lye for him, nor would have us slander his Creation for the honour of Regeneration, since he doth not destroy the Man when he makes a Christian. So far from it, that (as I have noted before) he charges us to *strive to enter in at the strait gate*, and to use *all our diligence to make our calling and election sure*. Which plainly implies, that he doth not intend to supersede our powers, when he repairs our natures ; and that although he made us without our own activity, yet he will not save us without our own endeavours. And therefore the holy Scripture always represents to us the way of God's working good in our Souls, to be, by exciting our Spirits, by assisting and strengthening our Faculties, and by co-operating with us, not by over-bearing our capacity, and doing all for us without us ; insomuch, that that Man who dreams of being carried to Heaven by Omnipotency, without his own concurrence, is so far from any encouragement from the Scripture, to hope that ever he shall come there, that it is most certain he shall never see that happy estate, unless it please the Divine Mercy  
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to make him so early sensible of this fatal error, that he may timely repent, and pursue the right way thither. For he that expects to attain the Kingdom of Heaven by Miracle, it will be a Miracle indeed if he come thither.

And this fond Opinion is as mischievous as it is unscriptural, not only as it apparently deprives a Man of all the comfortable reflections of his own Conscience upon whatsoever (by the grace of God) he hath obtained, forasmuch as it equals the condition and character of the most slothful Epicure, with that of the most Generous and Industrious; but especially as it disposes Men to slight all the means of Grace, and all the advantages of God's Church, and that upon good reason: for if this Opinion be true, they are all insignificant and collusory. It also tempts Men to sin, and that without regret or remorse, under a pretence that they cannot help it; and, in short, it perfectly betrays them to their own lusts, and into the hands of the Devil, making way for whatsoever temptation he will think fit to make use of. For the Man of this Persuasion (That it is impossible to make resistance,) is bound, by his own Principles, and to save himself useless trouble, to strike Sail, and sur-

surrender upon the first Assault or Summons.

3. A third dangerous Opinion, which it is necessary to be cautioned against, is, A mistaken Notion of Sins of Infirmary. This, at first mention of it, may seem of kin to that which I last spoke of; but as I intend it, it is of a different nature, *viz.* when Men do not altogether discourage their own Endeavours, upon the pretence of Natural Impotency in general, but yet persuade themselves, that some certain Sins in particular are so necessary to them, and unavoidable, that God will allow of them under the favourable notion of Infirmities, and pardon them without Repentance.

It is very true, there are such things as pitiable Infirmities, which the best of Men cannot be altogether free from, and which Infinite Goodness therefore so far considers, as to make a vast difference between them and Wilful or Presumptuous Sins; pardoning the former, upon a general Repentance; whereas he requires a very particular Repentance for, and Reformation of the latter. But the mischief (which I seek here to prevent) is, when Men cheat themselves into a persuasion, that some voluntary sin or other is necessary to them,  
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and therefore must come under this estimate of Infirmary, and consequently need neither be repented of, nor forsaken: from whence it comes to pass, that ordinarily the sin which hath been most customary and habitual to them, (because it *easily besets them*, and they find it not easie or pleasant to them to forego it,) is therefore encouraged under the favourable name of Infirmary. For thus they say, Every Man hath his Infirmities, and this is mine: And so the mouth of Conscience is made up, as if a Pardon of course were due to it, without the solemnity of Reformation.

They will allow such a case to be that which they must always complain of, but yet they never expect or desire to see it cured; for these Sins are thought to be only like the *Canaanites in the land*, or some other remainder of those devoted and accursed Nations, which must never be quite rooted out, but be always as Thorns in the Eyes, and Goads in the Sides of the true *Israelites*, i. e. tolerated, but not extirpated.

But if this be not a very false Notion, what was the meaning of our Saviour, when he requires us to *cut off our right hand*, and to *pluck out our right eye*, when either of them *offend us*? that is, That if we will  
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enter into Life, we must part with the Sin that is as pleasant to us as our Eyes, as necessary and convenient to us as our Right Hand, and as painful to part withal as either of them: whereas, if the aforesaid Doctrine of Infirmitie take place with us, it will save all the pains and trouble of Mortification, and keep the body of Sin whole and entire, and yet put Men in hopes they may go to Heaven notwithstanding; and no sin that we have a kindness to, but a Man may enjoy it without danger. For thus, it shall be one Man's infirmity to be Drunk, another Man's to Swear, a third Man's to be Seditious or Censorious; and, in short, by the benefit of a soft word or distinction (together with a good opinion of a man's self) he may reconcile God and Mammon, Christ and *Belial*, Hell and Heaven.

But this cheat is too palpable; for the plea of Infirmitie is only allowable in such cases as these following, namely, when either Ignorance or Mis-information betrays a Man into Error, or he fails in the manner of doing that, which was otherwise good for the matter of it; or a great fear over-powers him, or the suddenness of a temptation surprizes him, before he was so much aware as to recollect himself; or something of like nature to these, may be  
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called Sins of Infirmary. But assuredly, that which a Man knows to be a Sin, and yet commits it, that which a Man takes pleasure in, and lives in the habitual practice of, can never be esteemed a meer pitiable Infirmary: And therefore whosoever truly loves his own Soul, and is in earnest for Eternity, hath great reason to take care of this Errour.

4. A fourth Danger I would give warning against, is, the mistaken opinion about Conversion to God: which, if it be rightly understood, is a great, solemn and divine thing; and where-ever it is truly accomplish'd, is the happiest passage of a Man's whole life, and the very Crisis of Eternity, *viz.* when either a Man, who (by unhappy education, or otherwise) was betrayed to evil and mischievous opinions, comes, by the advantage of better information, and the grace of God, to be otherwise instructed and set right in his principles; or especially when one who was formerly of a lewd and flagitious life, is, by the grace of the Gospel, now brought to a sight of his sin, a sense of his danger, and thereupon changes his whole course, and becomes a new and holy Man: Both these are (as I said) great, and solemn, and happy things, to be spoken of with  
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all reverence, and considered with joy and admiration.

But now there is a two-fold mistake very common in this great affair, *viz.* when either such a Conversion (as we have now described) is looked upon as universally necessary, and prescribed to all Men, as the Condition of their Salvation; or else, (which is far worse) when the whole nature of the thing is mistaken, and conversion from sin to God, is made to be a meer momentaneous act, a kind of qualm or fit of Religion, and as such is relied upon, as sufficient to Salvation, without an habitual course of holy life subsequent to it.

Both these last named are false and dangerous Opinions; but the evil of the former of them lies in this, that it is apt to perplex the Consciences, and disturb the Peace of very good Men, *viz.* when those who, by the blessing of God, have been trained up in good Principles, and, by his grace, not only preserved from a loose and debauched life, but engaged also in a holy and virtuous course all along, shall, notwithstanding, have it preached to them, and press'd upon them, that they also must be converted and born again, or else they shall never see the Kingdom of God. This, indeed, was necessary and proper Doctrine

ctrine from our Saviour to *Nicodemus*, and to the generality of the Jews, as well as from the Apostles to the Pagan World, who had been nursed up in Ignorance, Superstition and Idolatry: But it was not preached to *John* the Baptist, nor to Saint *John* the Apostle; nor to *Timothy*, who had *known the holy scriptures from a child*, 2 *Tim.* iii. 15. and who had been early engaged in an holy life, by the blessing of God upon the careful instructions of his Grandmother *Lois*, and his Mother *Eunice*, chap. i. 5. nor can such Doctrine (without equal indiscretion and danger) be preached to several others now who are of that condition, that, as our Saviour saith, *they need no repentance*.

But it is the latter of these Opinions about Conversion, which I intend in this place principally to give caution against, viz. when a Man who hath been formerly either of a sottish and careless, or of a notoriously bebauch'd and profligate life, shall be encouraged to think his peace is made with God, from such time as he hath had a qualm come over his Conscience, and been put into a mood of seriousness and devotion, having been taught to date his Regeneration from hence.



The mischief of this mistake is very frequent and apparent, for that it tempts Men to grow secure before they are safe, and it is very common and natural for such Persons to grow careless of themselves, upon a vain confidence in this kind of Conversion, as if now their work were done, without the trouble of *bringing forth fruits worthy of repentance and amendment of life*. Nay, further, when perhaps such Men have committed some such great sin, as (that were it not for this unhappy error) would startle their Consciences, they are hereby (instead of applying themselves to God, by hearty repentance) enclined only fondly to look back, and to remember, that such a time I was converted, and enter'd into a state of grace, and therefore all is well enough already; and from hence it comes to pass also, that nothing is more frequent than such Mens falling from grace, in this sense, that is, to apostatize from such hopeful beginnings: for, indeed, they were at most but beginnings; but being foolishly rested in, as if they had amounted to the whole attainment of Christianity, they flatter Men into security first, and betray them to shame afterwards.

And the falsity of this conceit is evident in this, that whereas it makes the great bu-  
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sineſs of Eternity to lie in an inſtantaneous act, the tranſaction, perhaps, of a Day, or an Hour, or a Sermon, the holy Scripture quite contrariwiſe repreſents it as the buſineſs of a Man's whole life, and requires, that Men not only ſet out well, but that they make a daily and gradual progreſſion towards Heaven; foraſmuch as it tells us, that otherwiſe, he who *hath begun in the ſpirit, may end in the fleſh*; and that a Man may *return with the dog to his vomit, &c.* and then *the latter end of ſuch a man is worſe than the beginning.*

5. Another miſtake, not inferiour to any of the former, either in reſpect of Errour or Danger, is about the Power and Authority of Conſcience, *viz.* when Men perſuade themſelves that all is right and true, which they are ſatiſfied of in their Conſciences, and that it is lawful for them to do whatſoever that dictates to them, or allows them in; as if Conſcience were not a thing to be ruled, but to rule, and were inveſted with a kind of Sovereignty, ſo that it were a Law to it ſelf, and to others alſo. If you reprove ſome Man's Opinion, (inſtead of Arguments for it) he tells you it is his Conſcience, and that's enough: or if you blame ſome action of his life, he regards not your reprehensions; for, ſaith he,  
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My Conscience smites me not for it, and therefore I am safe : or if you forewarn him of some Counsels or Undertakings, as tending to Sedition, and publick Disturbance, it is no matter, it is his Conscience, and he must pursue it.

The mischief of this is very intolerable ; for by this means the most foolish and extravagant actions are justified, and the Malefactor rendred incorrigible, being both hardened in his Sin and in his Sufferings ; for (if it come to that) you cannot convince such Men, for they have a Testimony within them which is infallible ; and in confidence of that, whensoever you bring an Argument which they cannot answer, they reject and despise it, as a temptation of the Devil. If you rebuke them, you blaspheme the holy Spirit ; if you go about to restrain them, you violate the most sacred Prerogative of Conscience, and are guilty of the only sacrilege which (in their opinion) can be committed ; and which is worst of all, thus God is entitled to the very Passions and Follies of such Men, and to all the Extravagancies in the World ; for if it be their Conscience, God must patronize it, and bear the blame of all.

Now one would justly wonder what these Men think this thing, call'd Conscience, to

be ; surely no less than some God Almighty within them : and so, indeed, several expressions of them seem to intimate. But certainly, if they thought Conscience to be nothing else but a Man's own Mind, or Opinion, or Persuasion, or practical Judgment, (which certainly it is, and no more,) they could not either in reason or modesty think fit that this should have such a paramount Authority, as to bear all down before it, at least they could not imagine that their peculiar Fancy or Humour, their particular Education or Idiopathy, their Ignorance or Stubbornness, should be lawless and uncontrollable. For if Mens Opinions or Persuasions are infallible, what is Instruction for ? If the Light within be sufficient, what is the Light of holy Scripture for ? If Conscience be a Guide to it self, to what purpose are Spiritual Guides provided by Divine Wisdom for our Conduct ? And if that may not be restrained in its Extravagancy, wherefore were Laws made, and Magistrates appointed ? So that either this wild Notion of the Power of Conscience must be false, or else Instruction and Education are useless, Magistracy and Ministry impertinent, and both Laws and Scripture of no effect. And if notwithstanding this Notion be embraced, it is plainly im-

impossible that such Men should live either holily or comfortably. Not holily ; because Conscience thus left alone to it self, without Guide or Rule, will, in all likelihood, follow Men's Temper and Inclination, and then a Man's most beloved Lusts shall be the Dictate of his Conscience. Not comfortably ; because he that is destitute of a Law and a Guide to resolve him in Difficulties, must needs (if he consider and be sensible of any thing at all) be perplexed with perpetual Disputes, and endless Scrupulosity upon every Undertaking.

But it will be pretended, that there is no help for it : but when all is done, Men must and will follow their own Consciences ; forasmuch as Discourse, or Laws, or Scripture, signifie nothing till they are applied by Conscience : they, indeed, may give aim, or may be of the nature of Evidence in a Cause ; but it is Conscience which collects the Result ; and he that complies not with that, is guilty of Sin, whether the Evidence was well summed up or no. To this purpose, some passages of Scripture are usually misapplied : *e. g.* *Let a man be persuaded in his own mind,* Rom. xiv. 5. *That which is not of faith, is sin,* chap. xiv. 23. *and he that doubteth, is damn'd,* &c.

I do confess here is something of truth in this Plea, but blended with a great deal of error ; and here, I verily believe, lies the rise or occasion of the Persuasion of the extravagant Authority of Conscience. But when we consider wisely, the truth is no more but this, That a Man's Conscience ought to go along with him in the acts of his Obedience to the Law ; or, That he ought to be persuaded the thing is lawful to be done, before he does it, otherwise he doth violence to himself, and condemns his own act. But it doth not follow, that therefore it is lawful to do whatsoever he is persuaded of in his Conscience, or that it is not his Duty to do any thing but what he is so persuaded of ; for this abrogates all the Laws both of God and Man, and makes their Legislations to depend upon private consent. If therefore any Man, through Ignorance, or Prejudice, or any such cause, shall have his Conscience alienated from the Law, or dictating otherwise to him ; this, as it cannot make a Law, so neither can it discharge him from the Obligation of one. All that this works, is, that it puts a Man into so sad a case, that he may sin both ways, that is, both in Obeying and in Disobeying : but because he is brought into this strait by his own default,

default, it is evident, this cannot acquit his Conscience; for one Sin is no discharge for another. That therefore which he hath now to do, is first to inform his Conscience better, and then to comply with the Rule.

And that this is the true state of this case, will appear (beyond all exception) by the resolution of our Saviour himself, in two passages of the Gospel; the former, *Matth. vi. 23. If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!* Where first he supposes that the Principles of a Man's Mind or Conscience may be very false and erroneous, and then pronounces, that he that is in such a case, is in a very deplorable condition; forasmuch as the error of his Conscience will be sure to run him upon miscarriages of life, and the privilege of its being his Conscience will not exempt him from the consequences of so doing.

The other passage is *John xvi. 2.* where he foretells his Disciples, that they should fall into so unhappy times, and lie under such Prejudices and Misprisions with the World, *that those that killed them, should think they did God good service.* Now, those that think they do good service, and perform a meritorious action in such a thing,

most certainly follow their Consciences in so doing: And yet it is as certain, that this did not justify the fact; for then the Persecutors of Christianity, and Murderers of the Apostles, must have been a very conscientious and commendable sort of Men. Wherefore it is evident, that Conscience is no rule nor sufficient warranty for our Actions.

6. In the sixth place, Let him who hath thoughts of attaining the Happiness of the World to come, take care of entertaining an opinion of the Impossibility of Religion according to the measures of the holy Scripture. This is a common prejudice upon the minds of ignorant or cowardly People; for they fancy, that a Life according to the Laws of the Gospel, is rather a fine Speculation, or a philosophical Hypothesis, than a necessary and practicable Truth. They confess, it would be a very good and commendable thing, if we could comply with the Rules of our Saviour; but they look upon it as impossible, and so of no indispensable obligation. For they say, our Natures are so corrupted by our Fall, and thereby our Faculties are so weak and impaired, that we are, indeed, nothing but Infirmary on the one side; and on the other, we are so beset



beset with Temptations, and the World, the Flesh and the Devil are so much too strong for us, that we must sin, there's no avoiding of it, and God must pardon, and there's an end of the business.

Now if such an opinion as this possess a Man, it will prove impossible that ever he should live holily. For if natural corruption have not enfeebled us sufficiently, this cowardly conceit will be sure to do it effectually. For no Man (in this case especially) is ever better than his design, nor rises higher than his aim or projection, (no more than Water rises above its Fountain;) nay, it is a thousand to one, but he that sets his mark low, will fall yet lower in his prosecution; and he that is cowed and dejected in his own mind, so as to think he shall never overcome the Difficulties before him, most certainly never will or can do it.

He only is like to prove a good Christian, that resolves, with the true-hearted *Israelites*, to despise Difficulty and Danger; and to conquer the good Land, whatsoever it cost him; for such a Man unites his Strength, collects his Forces, and disheartens his Enemies, as well as defies their Opposition: but the despondent cowardly Person both enfeebles him-

self, and encourages his Enemies ; so that he can neither attempt, nor much less effect any brave thing.

And the same conceit of Impossibility, will as certainly render our Spirits uncomfortable as remiss ; because after all the pretence a Man can make for his cowardice and remissness, he cannot but observe the strain of the whole Scripture to be against him : And surely, that Man cannot enjoy himself very well under those Attainments, which God and his own Conscience condemn as mean and unworthy.

But after all, the Ground of this Opinion is as false as it is mischievous ; for, in the first place, the holy Scripture assures us of some Persons, and particularly of *Zacharias* and *Elizabeth*, Luk. i. 6. *That they walked in all the commandments of the Lord, blameless ; and were both righteous before God ;* and yet they were the Children of the same *Adam*, and exposed to all the Temptations, ill Examples and Difficulties with other Men. Besides, the aforesaid Opinion, under a pretence of Modesty, and an humble acknowledgment of humane Weakness, reflects very dishonourably both upon the Wisdom and Goodness of God, when it imputes to the  
great

great Law-giver of the World such Oversight and Severity, as to prescribe such Laws as were not fitted to the Capacities of those that were to be subject to them, and to be judged by them: Unto which add, That it puts an intolerable flight upon the power of Faith, and (which is more) upon the very Grace of God also, as if neither of them could carry us through all the Difficulties we should be exposed to. Upon all which Considerations (and several such other which need not here be mention'd) this Opinion, of the Impossibility of Religion, appears to be very bad, and such as ought by all means to be avoided by him that would lead *an Holy and Comfortable Life.*

7. And yet there is another Opinion, which is both as common and as dangerous as any of the former; against which therefore I will give caution, in the seventh and last place, *viz.* When though perhaps Religion shall not be universally pronounced to be impossible, yet it shall be thought to be only the peculiar business, or especially to belong to some certain sorts or conditions of Men, but not to be the general Calling, the necessary and indispensable Duty of all Men. Under this pretence, serious and constant Devotion

tion is looked upon as appropriate to the Cloyster, where Men live retired from the World, and are thought to have nothing else to do ; or to be the employment of Church-men, whose peculiar Profession it is ; or for Old and Bed-ridden Persons, who are fit for nothing else but a Prayer-Book ; or at least for Men fallen into Adversity, who have no other thing to retire to, and to support themselves withal, but the Contemplations of another World. But for Men of Callings and Business, or for those that are in the flower of Youth, and warmth of Blood, in Health and Prosperity, these are thought to have Allowances due to them, at least for the present, and the more solemn consideration of Religion must be adjourned to another time. If, in the mean while, such as these go to Church, and perhaps now and then say their Prayers, it is as much as is to be expected ; for their Business is pretended to be too great, or their Temptations and Avocations too many, or at least their Spirits are too light and brisk, to permit them to be strictly devotional, or to make Religion their Business.

Thus Men make vain Apologies: But doth God Almighty allow of them ? Hath he made any such Exceptions or  
Distin-

Distinctions? No, certainly; he hath made Religion every Man's Duty, and hath charged us *first to seek the kingdom of God, and his righteousness*; he hath equally imposed this task upon Prince and Peasant, Clergy and Laity, Rich and Poor, Master and Servant, Young and Old, the Afflicted and the Prosperous, the Man of Business, as well as those of Leisure and Retirement. He that hath an absolute Sovereignty over the World, that hath right to our Homage and Attendance, that hath laid infinite Obligations upon us to love and obey him; he that hath considered and forecast all our Circumstances, Businesses, Difficulties, Temptations and Excuses; he that observes our Carriage and Behaviour toward himself; he that cannot be deceived, will not be mocked, and is no Acceptor of Persons: He, I say, hath made no such Exceptions or Exemptions in this great Concern of Religion; and therefore they cannot be mention'd without great Unreasonableness, nor relied upon without horrible Danger.

If, indeed, Eternity were the peculiar concern of a certain sort and condition of Men only; or if Old Men only died, and none else; or if Rich Men can be contented that only Poor Men shall go to Heaven;

Heaven ; then the other sorts of Men may excuse themselves from Devotion : but otherwise, it is the greatest absurdity that can be, to hope for the End, without the Means.

What though Old Men must die ; yet will not Young Men quickly come to be Old Men too, at least if they do not die first ?

And what if Men of retired Lives have more leisure for Devotion, and more time to spend in it ; yet is any Man so hard put to it, but that he may ( if he will ) spare some time for his Soul and Eternity ?

What if it be acknowledged, that Churchmen have peculiar Obligations upon them to recommend Religion to others ; yet it is certain, that the necessity of practising it, is common to others with themselves ; forasmuch as there is no Duty of it peculiar to them, unless it be to be exemplary in all.

It is true, poor Men, and Men in adversity, are justly accusable of intolerable sottishness, if they who are frown'd upon by the World, do not seek to repair their unhappiness by the favour of God, and the hopes of another World. But it is as true, that rich Men, and those in prosperity,

prosperity, are as justly to be upbraided with Disingenuity, and base Ingratitude, if they be not devout towards him that hath dealt so bountifully with them.

Besides all this, there is no Calling or Condition of Men, but under it they may (if they have a heart to it) very affectionately attend upon Religion, consistently enough with all other lawful Business or Occasions. Almighty Wisdom hath not so ill contrived the state of this World, that there should be any necessity that Business should supplant Religion, or Religion intrench upon Business: nor, if things be rightly considered, are these two kind of Affairs so contrary, or doth Devotion take up so much Time, or so much exhausts Men's Spirits, but with a good Zeal, and a little Forecast, both may be carried on together. Or if it were otherwise, and that the care of our Souls would indeed weary our Bodies, or the securing of Heaven would disorder and a little incommode our secular Interests; yet neither is Life so certain, nor the present World so considerable, nor Heaven so mean and contemptible an Interest, as that a Man should not be willing to put himself to some trouble for the latter, as well as for the former.

And

And as there wants not Reason for this course, so neither are Examples wanting in this kind, where Men that might have made such Excuses as aforesaid (as justly as any Persons whatsoever) have notwithstanding quitted and disdained them all, and applied themselves remarkably to the Service of God and Devotion. For if Riches, and the variety of Worldly Cares and Business which usually attend them, were a just Excuse from attendance upon Religion, then *Job* might have claimed exemption, who was the Richest Man in all the East, and yet the Devoutest too: His thousands of Sheep, and Oxen, and Camels, his abundance of Servants, his numerous Family, and the care of all these, did not tempt him to the intermission of one Day's Devotion.

If either the Temptations and Pleasures of Youth, or the Voluptuousness of a Court, or the multitude of Examples of Profaneness, or the Cares of a prime Minister of State, or the Jealousies of a Favourite, could all together have amounted to a just dispensation from the strictness of Religion; then *Daniel*, who was in all those circumstances, might have pleaded it, and upon that account might have retrench'd his Conscience,  
and



and intermitted his Praying three times a day, especially when he knew his Enemies watcht advantage against him in this particular.

If the general Licence of Soldiers, the Temptations such Men are expos'd to, the Necessities they often are press'd with, or the sudden Avocations they must be subject to, could make a tolerable Apology for Profaneness, or an Excuse for Irreligion ; then *Cornelius, Act. x.* had been excused from *praying to God continually, and serving the Lord, with all his house.*

Nay, lastly, If either the State and Grandeur, or the Prerogative of a Sovereign Prince ; if the Impunity of a King, or the Glory and Affluence of a Kingdom ; nay, if either Interest of State, or weight of Affairs, the Cares and Policies of Government, had been altogether sufficient to make a Dispensation from the strict Obligations of Religion ; then *David* might have pretended to it, in abatement of his Duty to God, and of his constant and ardent Devotions.

But all these holy Men considered, that God was a Great Majesty, not to be trifled with, and an impartial Judge, without respect of Persons ; that Eternity was of more consequence than the present Life,

Life, and Heaven better than this World ; and they were so far from thinking an Eternal Interest to be inconsistent with the management of Temporal Affairs, that, contrariwise, they believed there was no such effectual way to succeed in the latter, as by a diligent prosecution of the former.

But as for those who being convinced of the absolute necessity of Religion, and of the inexcusableness of a total and final omission of it, would, notwithstanding, make it to be only the business of Old Age, or a Sick Bed ; these (although by the folly and sloth of Men, they have too many Followers in their Opinion, yet certainly) are the most absurd and inexcusable of all. Forasmuch as in order to the making such an Hypothesis passable with their own Consciences, they must not only suppose several very uncertain things, which no wise Man can have the confidence or rather madness to presume upon : but the very supposition it self implies divers other things so base and disingenuous, as no good Man can be guilty of.

*First*, They make very bold and desperate Suppositions : As for Example, that they shall live to Old Age, and die by a leisurely and lingring Sicknes. That God will then accept of Mens Return and Repentance,

pentance, (who never stopt in their career of Sin and the World, till Death arrested them.) That God will give them Repentance, what time they prefix to him, or that they can repent when they will. That they shall be fit for the most weighty Affairs when they are at the last gasp, and the most important of all Business can be transacted when their Strength and Spirits are exhausted. And, to say no more, That it is fit and tolerable for a Man to leave that to be last discharged, which, if any accident prevent him in, he is everlastingly ruin'd. All these things must be taken for granted by him that shall venture to put off the business of his Soul to the last act of his Life, every one of which are at the best uncertain, and for the most part false, and therefore to build upon them, is extreme Presumption.

*Secondly,* If the foundation of such a course were not rotten and unsafe, yet that which is built upon it is base and disingenuous; for the Man who upon any considerations whatsoever can content himself to put off the things wherein God's Honour and his Soul's Welfare are concerned to the very last, proclaims he hath an unreasonable love and admiration of this World,

World, for the sake of which he postpones Religion, and that he hath no real kindness for, or good opinion of the ways of God, in that he puts the care of that business as far off as possibly he can; and indeed, that he would not mind God or his Soul at all, if it were not for meer necessity, and fear of Damnation. Now, whether this then can be a reasonable course, or he be a Candidate of the Kingdom of Heaven that governs himself by these measures, it is too easie to judge. Wherefore, let the Man who hath entertained any Principles of Religion, and hath any value for his Soul, and care of Eternity, utterly abominate and avoid this last named, as well as all the fore-mentioned Prejudices or Opinions.

And having so done, let him then attend to the more positive and direct Advices in the following Chapter.

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## C H A P. VIII.

### *Directions for an effectual prosecution of Religion.*

**H**E that is resolved to be a Christian in earnest, will find it necessary (in the prosecution of his Design) to attend to the Six following Directions.

I. Let

1. Let such a Man be sure always to keep himself strictly Sober : By which I mean, not only that he avoid the extremity of a Debauch, but that he indulge not himself so liberal an use of Wine and Strong Drink, as that he shall come too near the confines of Intemperance, especially in the general habit of his Life ; or that he take care, that through facility or carelessness he comply not with the too common practice in this particular. Forasmuch as it is evident, that the approving a Man's self to God, and the taking care of Eternity, are such weighty and important Affairs, that they must needs require the greatest composure of thoughts, and the utmost intention of our minds ; and can neither be worthily taken in hand, nor much less pursued as they ought, in such a light and jolly humour as the custom of tippling doth ordinarily put Men into ; for that relaxes a Man's Thoughts, and fills his Spirit with froth and levity ; it renders the Mind of a Man so aery and trifling, that he becomes transported with a Jest, and diverted by every Impertinence ; it banishes sollicitude, and puts him besides his guard of caution and circumspection : a Man's Head, in such a case, is impatient of weighty Considerations,  
inca-

incapable of grave Deliberations ; his Thoughts are fluctuating and uncertain, he comes to no stable resolution, nor can he make any constant progress: And surely, such a temper cannot make a fit soil for Religion to take root in, or to thrive upon.

Besides, Intemperance doth not only disturb the Reason of the Mind, but also weakens and depresses it, and exalts Fancy in the room of it ; which fills a Man with wild, loose, and incoherent Idea's ; and, which is still worse, it raises the brutal Passions also, both irascible and concupiscible ; and thereby makes work for Repentance and Mortification ; which must needs become a very hard task to perform, when the same causes which have made it necessary, have therewithal impaired those powers that should accomplish it ; and therefore this course is utterly inconsistent with the design of Religion.

Moreover, besides the evil of Intemperance it self, it exposes a Man to a thousand temptations, and puts him at the very mercy of the Devil ; forasmuch as he that is under the power of Drink, is not only out of God's keeping, but out of his own also ; he hath quenched God's Spirit, whilst he inflamed his own ; he hath deprived

prived himself of God's Providence, by going out of his way ; and he is not perfectly in possession of his own Mind, and therefore surely is in a dangerous condition.

To which add, That whereas Sobriety and Watchfulness use always to be accounted inseparable Companions ; it is apparent, that he who neglects the former, can never be able to maintain the latter ; and consequently, the imtemperate Man cannot be fit for Prayer and Meditation, and other great exercises of Piety. Upon all which accounts, our Saviour, *Luke xxi. 34.* charges those that will be his Disciples, to *take heed to themselves, lest at any time their hearts be over-charged with surfeiting and drunkenness, &c.*

2. In the Second place, Let the Man who designs to prosecute Religion effectually, take care of Intemperance of Mind, as well as of that of the Body ; and with equal heed avoid intoxication by wild Opinions, as he would do a surfeit of Meats and Drinks. The Prophet *Isaiah* complains of the People of the Jews, *Isa. xxix. 9.* that *they were drunken, but not with wine ; they staggered, but not with strong drink.* And the Apostle exhorts Men to be *sober-minded.* So that, it seems, there is a kind of Spiritual Drunkenness, which disguizes Men's Minds,

Minds, as much as the other brutal Custom disorders their Outward Person. Of this there are a great many Instances, but two most remarkable, *viz.* Opiniatre and Scrupulosity : I mean, by the former, when Men have no settled Judgment in Religion, but allow themselves an endless inquisitiveness in matters of Opinion, and are always hunting after Novelty : By the other, I understand a captious or squeamish humour of Conscience, under which Men perpetually vex both themselves and others with unreasonable Fears and Jealousies.

As for the former of these, it is notoriously the humour of some Men to be always doubting, disputing, and gazing after New Light, as if all Mankind had been imposed upon till now, and the Old Way were not the good Way, but every new Invention, or upstart Notion, contained some admirable Mystery in it ; therefore they think it necessary to try all things, before they can hold fast that which is best ; and indeed, surfeit on the Forbidden Fruit of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, as if it were the same with the Tree of Life. And if, perhaps, they fall not into any of those dangerous Opinions which I gave caution against in the former Chapter, yet it is by chance if they do not ;  
for



for they having no Judgment to discern the difference of things, no Balast to poise and settle them, are *driven up and down with every wind of doctrine*; they are of the opinion of the last Book they read, or the last Man they discoursed with, for always the newest and freshest Opinion is the best; and so (as they say of the Chameleon) they take their colour from the next Object. This temper is a mighty disparagement to Divine Truth; for it looks as if there were no certain way of satisfaction to the minds of Men, but that they must always seek, and never find, and endlessly dispute, but could never come to a resolution: and it is so intolerable an impediment of the life and practice of Religion, that it is, many times, more harmless to be settled in some bad Opinions, than to be thus unsettled, and to dispute every thing. For besides that this course draws off the Spirits of Men, and spends their best heat upon unprofitable Notions, and so takes them off from studying their own Hearts, examining their Consciences, and diligent attendance to their Ways and Actions; it raises Passion, nourishes Pride, foment's Divisions, and, in a word, turns Christianity into *vain Janglings*. Whereas a truly sober Christian is readier to believe than to

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dispute

dispute in Divine Things, and more careful to practise old Rules, than to devise new Models ; he studies the Scripture sincerely, not for Objections, but for Resolution ; he lives up to what he knows, and prays God to direct him where he is uncertain ; and so is led by the Divine Grace in a plain path towards Heaven. The Novellist or great Disputer, contrariwise, being unresolved of his way, makes no haste in his Journey, and cannot very earnestly practise any thing to day, because he cannot tell what opinion he shall be of to morrow.

And then for the other instance of intemperance of Mind, namely, Scrupulosity: when Men have such head-strong and ungovernable, or such shy and squeamish Consciences, that they boggle at every thing which doth not just fit their peculiar fancy and humour, though they can give no reasonable account of their jealousy or aversation, but only they dislike and are offended with such and such (indifferent) things, they know not why, their Conscience takes check at them, and there is no more to be said in the case. Now, such as these can by no means be reputed sober Men who (like as we say of Drunkards) see double, and consequently fear where no fear is, or who are terrified by their own idle Fancies, their

their Brains being clouded and darkened by the crude steams of riot and excess. This temper however in some cases it may be pitiable, is, notwithstanding, very mischievous, not only as it disturbs the Peace of the Church and of Mankind, by rendering those who are under the power of it, busie and pragmatikal, censorious and uncharitable towards all that are not just of their own mode and size, but (which is far worse) it mis-represents the Divine Majesty, as if he were a captious Deity, who watched Mens haltings, to take advantage against them, as having more mind to damn than to save them. By which means it discourages Men from Religion, as if it were the most anxious and uncomfortable thing in the World; and consequently of all this, it extremely hinders proficiency in Vertue; for he that is always jealous of his way, will often make halts, or have a very uncomfortable progress.

On the other side, he that is likely to make a good Christian, satisfies himself of the Divine Goodness and Candour, in interpreting the actions of his Creatures, and being conscious of his own sincerity, in following closely the rule of the Scripture, where it is plain, thinks himself at

liberty where that is silent, and takes the direction of his Spiritual Guides where it is obscure, and then goes chearfully and vigorously on his way towards Heaven.

3. Next to regard of Sobriety both of Body and Mind, let the Man who designs for the other World, take heed that the present World grow not too much upon him, and distract or overburden him in his Journey towards Heaven: and the diligence and circumspection in this point ought to be the greater, in regard this World is placed near us, and therefore is apt to seem great to our sight; and the other (though incomparably greater) being at a distance from us, is apt to seem little and contemptible. Besides, it is the chief aim of the Devil to make the present World seem much more beautiful and valuable than it is, that by its blandishments he may soften us, by its allurements debauch us, or at least by the care and concerns of it distract us and take off our edge to better things.

It is certain also, that he whose affections are eagerly engaged upon secular Interests, can never be ingenuous and free enough to have a right understanding of the true and real difference of things, nor conscientious enough to stand by that Truth  
which

which he understands ; for he can never be steady in any Principles, but must turn with every tide, and sail with every wind, as it shall make for his purpose. Besides, it is plain, that our Souls are too narrow to hold much of this World, and yet to afford room for any great share of Heaven together with it. Therefore our Saviour hath said, *Ye cannot serve God and Mammon* ; and accordingly, in his first Sermon on the Mount, *Matth. vi. 24, 25, 26.* to the intent that his Doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven might take place in the hearts of his Disciples and Hearers, he very emphatically and largely cautions them against admiration of the World, and too eager pursuit of it. And in the aforementioned passage, *Luk. xxi. 34.* to his admonition against over-charging themselves with Surfeiting and Drunkenness, he subjoins *the cares of this life*, intimating, that those two kinds of Vices (as opposite as they may seem to each other) agree in their malignant influence upon Religion : neither, indeed, are they so contrary in their natures as they seem to be : for as Drunkenness is nothing but a liquid Covetousness ; so, on the other side, Covetousness is a kind of dry thirst or drunken, insatiable humour ; and it is so much the more dan-

gerous and incurable than the other, as it is the less infamous, meerly because it doth not presently discover it self by such odd and ridiculous symptoms as the other doth.

To avoid this therefore, let the Man we speak of, consider constantly with himself the shortness and uncertainty of the present Life, by which he will easily be apprehensive of how much more consequence it is to provide for Eternity, than for that little abode we are to make in that state wherein the things of this World are of any use to us.

Let him also observe the success of things, and he will easily conclude, that much more of our Prosperity is owing to the Providence of God, than to our own Forecast and Endeavours ; and consequently, that it is a better provision for our Children and Posterity, to leave them under the Blessing of God, than in great Possessions.

And in consequence of these Persuasions, he will not be tempted to grasp too much Business, so as to hinder him in Devotion, but will rather consider his own strength, viz. how much care and labour he can undergo, without depression of his Spirit, or debasing his Mind ; and will weigh the  
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Dangers and Temptations of the World against the Pleasures and Allurements of Riches.

This will also encline him prudently to methodize his Affairs, and to put that Business which seems necessary into the best order, that so it may take its due place in subordination to his greater Concerns, and not supplant or interfere with them.

To which purpose also, if he have any considerable matters to dispose of, he will think it convenient to set his House in order, as well as his Business, and have always his *Will* made, not only that thereby he may be the more effectually admonished of his Mortality, and be provided against the surprisal of Death, but that in the mean time he may have the less sollicitude upon his Spirit, and may the more singly and undistractedly apply himself to his main Business. And then,

4. In the Fourth place, let him attend to the Counsel of *Jesus* the Son of *Syrach*, Ecclus. ii. 1. *My son, if thou come to serve the Lord, prepare thy soul for temptation* : that is, as if he had said, 'Whensoever thou undertakest  
'a course of Religion, be not so fond as  
'to imagine thou shalt be able to accomplish it without sweat and difficulty, or  
'so secure as to think of obtaining the

‘ Crown without a Conflict, but expect to  
‘ meet with Temptations of several kinds,  
‘ and arm thy self accordingly ; especial-  
‘ ly in thy first entrance on such a course,  
‘ thou must look for the sharpest Encoun-  
‘ ters ; for thy Enemies are not so soon  
‘ vanquish’d as desied, nor are they ei-  
‘ ther so fair and civil as to give thee scope  
‘ to harden and fortifie thy self in thy  
‘ Enterprize, or so imprudent as to slip  
‘ the opportunity of thy Weakness and  
‘ Security together. Beginnings, in all  
‘ such cases, are attended with the great-  
‘ est Hazards and Difficulties. The Devil  
‘ rages most at first, out of indignation  
‘ to suffer the Prey to be taken out of his  
‘ mouth ; whereas when he is past hopes  
‘ of recovering it, he hath more wit than  
‘ to labour in vain, and will not so much  
‘ trouble himself to tempt, when he sees  
‘ no likelyhood of success ; but he is more  
‘ resolute, than quickly to despair, or  
‘ give over his siege, upon the first denial  
‘ of his summons. No, he will storm  
‘ and batter thee, night and day, and cast  
‘ in all his bombs and fiery darts to af-  
‘ fright and compell thee to a surrender.  
‘ And for the Flesh, it is certain, that  
‘ the first checks which are given to sen-  
‘ sual Inclinations, are sharpest, and go  
‘ most



‘most against the grain, because they  
‘have used to take their full scope and  
‘swinge : indeed, when a Man hath ac-  
‘customed them to denial in their impor-  
‘tunities, they, by degrees and in time,  
‘grow tame, and submit to the yoke  
‘of Reason, as Fire is extinguish’d by  
‘being suppress’d ; or as a violent Tor-  
‘rent that is turned into a new Channel,  
‘and restrained its ancient course, at first  
‘rages and foams and swells against those  
‘new Banks, though at length it ceases its  
‘tumult, and runs along quietly within  
‘its boundaries. It is not one overthrow  
‘will dishearten the Old Man ; he must  
‘be baffled and vanquish’d over and over,  
‘before he will cease to rebel : Nor must  
‘you think to find Vertue easie, till you  
‘have accustomed your self to it ; for  
‘nothing but Custom can entirely subdue  
‘Custom ; wherefore (till that is intro-  
‘duced) you must never be secure, but  
‘always upon your guard. And then, as  
‘for the World, the first rejection of  
‘that out of a Man’s Heart, is performed  
‘with as great difficulty as any of the  
‘former ; when a Man hath once cast  
‘over-board that luggage which other-  
‘wise was likely to have sunk him, it’s  
‘possible he may be glad of the exchange,

‘ and despise what before he admired ;  
‘ but it is a great matter to be convinced  
‘ of the necessity of unburthening the Vessel,  
‘ and a long dispute, before Men are  
‘ willing to lose any thing for Heaven.  
‘ It requires a great sagacity to see the  
‘ empty Pageantry of the World, so as  
‘ to slight Fame, Applause, Riches, Ease  
‘ and Pleasure ; a hard piece of Self-  
‘ denial, to abridge himself of the liberty  
‘ other Men take ; a great mastery of a  
‘ Man’s self, to be deaf to all the Charms,  
‘ and insensible of all the Caresses of the  
‘ World, and, in a word, to keep a Man’s  
‘ Eyes and Thoughts steadily fixed upon  
‘ another Life.

‘ Therefore there is great reason that  
‘ a Man should count upon difficulty in  
‘ the undertaking of Religion, lest when  
‘ it comes upon him unforeseen, he turn  
‘ recreant, and come off with shame and  
‘ loss.

Besides all this, there is something more  
which (I apprehend) the wise Man intended  
in the aforesaid Advice, namely,  
That he that resolves to be a vertuous  
Man, must fortifie his Mind, as well against  
the Persuasions, Examples and Discouragements  
of his less considerate Friends and Acquaintance,  
as against the  
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bitter Scoffs and Reproaches of his Enemies, that neither the insensible Insinuations of the one dissolve him into lukewarmness and remissness, nor the rough attacks of the other sink his Spirits, and shake his Resolution.

Opposition from each of these he must expect to meet with: from the former, out of folly, or else in their own defence, that such a Man's zeal may not reproach their negligence; from the other, out of malice and as Assailants, that they may reak their spite upon God and his holy ways; and therefore he ought to be provided for both.

Against the soft insinuations of injudicious Persons, he must be provided, *by being girt about with truth, and have on the breast-plate of righteousness*, as the Apostle advises, *Eph. vi. 14.* that is, he must establish his heart in an undoubted belief of the Truth on his side, by considering the Authority of God, the Example of our Saviour, and other holy Men, and hence be able *to render a reason of the hope that is in him with meekness and fear*; and if this do not ease him of their fond importunities, he must then put on some degree of morosity, and resolve, with *David, 2 Sam. vi. 22.* *that if this be to be vile, he will yet be more vile.*

Against

Against the rude treatments of lewd and malicious Men, he must, as the same Apostle advises, *Eph. vi. 16, 17. take the shield of faith, whereby he shall repel all the fiery darts of the wicked ; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation :* and in contemplation of the Objects of both those, he will be able generously to condemn all obloquy and reproach, as disdaining to be hector'd out of Salvation.

In a word, for all together : He must always remember, that Self-denial is the first Lesson of Christianity : and that he that hath not so learn'd it, as to *take up his Cross and follow Christ, cannot be his Disciple.*

5. In the Fifth place, Let the Candidate of the Kingdom of Heaven take care that he do not precipitate himself into temptation ; for as on the one side we ought to behave our selves stoutly and bravely, when it pleases God to lay it upon us ; so, on the other side, ought we to be as cautious and timorous of drawing it upon our selves ; the first of which is seldom separate from the last : for he that knows how to encounter a danger, will not ordinarily thrust himself into it : and usually, those who are so stupid and fool-hardy as to run themselves into difficulties,

ties, shew as little courage and conduct in conflicting with them, as they did discretion in the adventure upon them ; and no wonder, seeing in such a case they put themselves out of God's protection, trusting to themselves, and then they cannot in reason expect other than to be deserted by his Grace in such unwarrantable enterprizes.

Let the piously-disposed Man therefore not be so fond as to try experiments upon himself, lest he buy his knowledge of his own weakness at the cost of too great an hazard. Let him not go too near sin, in confidence that he can divide by an hair, and come off clever enough. For instance, Let him not nibble at an Oath, nor mince the matter of Profaneness, nor drink to the highest pitch of Sobriety, nor go to the utmost extremity of Justice in his Dealings ; for he knows not the deceitfulness of his own heart, nor considers the slippery ground he stands upon, that will thus venture to the very brink of his liberty.

Nor let him provoke Enemies to himself, by intemperate Zeal ; as if a good Man should not meet with opposition enough without his own procuring, nor the World had malice enough unless he inflamed and exasperated it ; especially, let him not  
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thrust himself into lewd Company, in confidence of his own integrity and stability ; for he hath no sufficient apprehension of the power and malice of the Devil, who by any of the aforesaid imprudences tempts him to tempt himself ; nay, nor doth he seem to hate and abominate sin so absolutely as he ought to do, that loves the vicinage and neighbourhood of it. What the Wise Man therefore advises, *Prov. v. 8.* concerning the whorish Woman, is very applicable to this case, *Remove thy way far from her, and come not near the door of her house :* And so also he saith of flagitious Men, *chap. iv. 14, 15. Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men ; avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away.* For he that goes ordinarily to the brink of a Precipice, is in great danger sometime or other to fall in ; and he that nibbles at the Bait, will one time or other be taken with the Hook.

6. Sixthly and lastly, As a discreet Man, and concerned for Eternal Life, ought not to be over-daring and confident in his approaches towards sin and danger, so neither ought he, on the other hand, to be timorous and strait-laced in things eminently and unquestionably good ; whether it be in instances of Devotion towards  
God,

God, or of Self-denial and Mortification of himself, or in acts of Charity towards others; for in all these there is such a scope and latitude, as that a brave and noble Spirit of Christianity may and will distinguish it self from a narrow and stingy temper in the discharge of them.

For Example: Such a Man as we speak of, neither will nor ought to confine his Devotions to such strict and precise measures, as that he that falls short of them will be guilty of an omission of his Duty; but will, contrariwise, find in his heart to spend something more than ordinary of his time in Prayers and Meditations, and such other acts of immediate Worship. He will not stick to apply somewhat more than the just tenth or tythe of his encrease to the encouragement of Religion; nor will he grudge to deny himself, upon weighty occasions, some of that pleasure which at other times he can allow himself without sin; or if occasion be, he will give Alms, not only out of the superfluity of his Estate, but to the utmost of his ability, perhaps beyond his convenience; for these things, though (generally considered) they are not matters of express Duty, yet do they not cease to be good, meerly because they are not commanded, so long as the  
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the species and kind of them is commanded : and besides, such extraordinary expressions of Obedience to a general Command, are very fit to demonstrate our Love to God, our Gratitude for his unspeakable Bounty towards us, and our Value of the Kingdom of Heaven, seeing that by such Instances especially, we shew that we *love the Lord our God with all our heart, and soul, and strength* ; and that we think nothing too dear for the assuring our selves of Eternal Life.

And though it would not be expressly a sin to omit any one of the instances of the several kinds aforesaid ; yet it must be a palpable argument of a narrow heart towards God, to yield no such instances at all, and cannot but proceed from very culpable superstition, to be afraid of so doing : nay, more, for a Man to be barren of such fruits, and careless of such performances, is a great point of folly and imprudence towards our selves, in respect of the comfort which our hearts might receive by such generosity ; for although by no after-act of ours (how excellent soever) it be possible for us to make any proper amends to the Divine Majesty, for our former offences and omissions ; yet by such expressions as these (we speak of)

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we shew our selves sensible of those miscarriages, and that we are under remorse for them, and we give proof, that we truly love God, though we have offended him, and desire to obtain his favour by the most costly Oblations. Upon all which accounts it seems very adviseable, that he who sets his Face towards Heaven, should endeavour to open and enlarge his heart this way, and not suffer himself to be cramped and contracted by any odd Opinions to the contrary.

Whereas therefore some Men seem to fantasie a frugal way of Religion, and accordingly enquire for the *minimum quod sic* (as we say) or the lowest degree of saving Grace, as if Heaven and Hell were divided by an hair, and they would be at the trouble of no more Piety than would just carry them out of danger ; They are to be admonished, that they seek after impossibilities and contradictions ; for it is, in truth, as if they should say, they would have fire without heat, Religion without Devotion, Piety without Affection, Holiness without Zeal, or that they desire to fear God, but have no inclination to love him.

To speak plainly, The lowest degree of Goodliness is never sought after but in an  
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ill temper of mind, and by a cowardly and hypocritical heart, nor can it be found with comfort; for the Essence of Grace is no more discoverable without the Fruits, than a Body without its Accidents; and therefore there are but two ways of obtaining true comfort in our Souls, *viz.* either by our daily Proficiency, or by our extraordinary Fervency. First, by daily Proficiency, we discover the life of Grace in our Hearts, as we discern a Plant to be alive, because we see it grows. Secondly, By extraordinary Fervency, as when perhaps a Man hath not had time to give proof of himself, by a long course of growing daily better and better, he may yet demonstrate a vital Principle of Good in his Soul, by such generous efforts of Zeal as we have been speaking of; in consideration of which, it is therefore not only sordid and ingrateful towards God, but very uncomfortable to our selves, to enquire for the meer essence of Grace, and to stand upon strict and precise terms of Duty.

But perhaps these Men think a pretence of Modesty will countenance them against any imputation of Cowardice or Hypocrisie; for they will say, they are contented with the lowest seat in Heaven, and so they may arrive at that state, they are ambi-

ambitious of no more. Silly Men ! as if it were a culpable ambition to endeavour to be very Good ! as if supreme Happiness could be modestly or remissly desired ! or that he either understood or truly desired Heaven, who would modestly complement others to enter before him ! No, no ; the chiefest Good is desirable for it self ; and the natural manner of desiring it, is to do it without measure and bounds, and it is impossible it should be otherwise : He therefore that hath these modest desires of Heaven, is either a stark Hypocrite, or hath no true notion of that state at all.

Besides, if it were or could be possible for a Man to be modest and good in this sense, I mean, to love Heaven but moderately, and yet to come there notwithstanding it could not be without great folly and danger, for a Man to set himself too low a mark in so high a concern ; for (as I observed before) we see it is almost constant with Men to shoot below their aim, and nothing more ordinary than for their practice to fall short of their speculations ; and therefore every Man that would not miscarry in his design, takes care to direct himself high enough : Accordingly in this great affair of Religion, he

he that yields to such a faint-hearted temper, under the notion of Modesty, will not only never be very good, but scarcely ever be tolerable or good at all ; for if his Projections be mean, his Performances will be worse, in regard the deceitfulness of his own Heart, the reluctancy of the Flesh, and the temptations of the Devil, will be sure to get some ground upon him ; and when abatements are made for all such disadvantages, what a pitiful dwarfish sanctity will this over-modesty arrive to at last ?

But yet after all this, some, perhaps, will be found so silly as to think, or so disingenuous as to pretend to a suspicion, at least, that such extraordinary works as we have been now recommending, may favour of merit or supererogation ; very likely, if any Man could be so absurd as to attribute any such thing to them : but surely, he that takes his measures of things from the holy Scripture, will be in little danger of such a gross mistake, especially whilst we are expressly told by our Saviour, that *when we have done all that we can, we are still but unprofitable servants* : For, can a mortal Man oblige his Maker ? can Infinite Perfection become a Debtor to Dust and Ashes ? But forasmuch as God requires  
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and deserves that we should love him with all our soul, and heart, and strength ; it is impossible we should love him too much, but great danger we should love him too little : it cannot therefore chuse but be the wisest and safest course to encline to the side of God Almighty, and to favour his interest against the sensuality, deadness and deceitfulness of our own hearts.

O but ( may some Men say ) will it not at least be Will-worship to affect uncommanded instances of love to God, and zeal of his Glory ? I answer, It is possible that such a thing may be, if these things be done with neglect of those expressions of love and zeal which God hath particularly appointed ; for this looks as if a Man pretended to be wiser than God himself, and so would undertake to chuse for him, what he should be pleased with. But now, if neither his Appointments in special be superseded by these voluntary Performances, nor these voluntary Performances be unagreeable to those standing and general Rules he hath given us, there can be no danger that Divine Goodness should ill interpret them, especially since there can be no imaginable reason why he that was pleased with a Free-will-Offering under the Law, should be offended  
with

with the like under the Gospel ; where, above all things, he requires a free, chearful, generous and reasonable service.

Wherefore, let the Man who really believes there will be Rewards of Well-doing in another World, and is resolved to obtain them, be always *ready to every good work*, and chearfully embrace the opportunity wherein he may perform a costly or a difficult service ; and let him take care that no tradition of men, nor superstitious conceit of his own head, neither the example of other mens careless lives, nor the too natural remissness of his own heart, prevail upon him to neglect such instances, whereby the Glory of God may be most advanced, and his own Comfort assured.

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**PART**

## PART II.

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# THE PRACTICE OF *Holy and Comfortable* LIVING.

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JER. vi. 16.

*Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.*





THE  
PRACTICE  
OF  
*Holy and Comfortable*  
LIVING.

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CHAP. I.

*Of secret Devotion between God and a  
Man's own Soul, and particularly of  
Prayer.*

**H**itherto, in the former Part of this little Book, we principally designed these Four things, *First*, To discover the Foundations of Religion in general, and from thence to demonstrate the Reality, Importance and Necessity of it. *Secondly*, To settle Men's Judgments, and determine them in the choice of their profession of Religion in particular. *Thirdly*, To give caution against certain com-  
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mon but dangerous Mistakes, which might otherwise undermine and disappoint the End and Purposes of Religion. *Fourthly* and lastly, To lay down some general Directions necessary to be premised, in order to the effectual prosecution of a Religious Design. And all this we comprized under the Title of *An Introduction*.

But now we come to build upon those foundations, and more particularly and plainly to draw out the lines of *An Holy and Comfortable Life*.

Here therefore it may seem expedient that we should, in the first place, consider the extent and whole compass of Religion, to the intent that it may not be taken for such a narrow and stingy thing as the generality of Men represent it, namely, to shew, that it is not a meer scuffle about Opinion, nor a canting with peculiar Phrases, neither a clubbing into a distinct Party under the notion of a Church or select Society, nor yet the formal acting of a part with the observance of abundance of nice Rites, Ceremonies and Punctilio's; that it is not a thing which looks beautifully, and promises fairly in publick, but is forgotten or laid aside at home; nor is it immured in a Closet, and never suffered to take the air in Conversation; to say

no more, that it is not meer Morality, nor meer Devotion, but both these in conjunction, together with all that is brave, and noble, and wise, and good ; all that can better the minds, and tempers, and lives of Men, and all that can improve the state of the World : All this is within the verge of Religion, especially the Christian Religion.

For so the Apostle intimates, *Phil. iv. 8.* *Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest (or grave,) whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely (or friendly,) whatsoever things are of good report ; if there be any vertue, and if there be any praise, think of these things : i. e. count them branches of Christianity ; for true Religion is nothing less, nothing, I mean, of no narrower extent than a wise and worthy conduct and manage of a man's self in all those relations we stand in, namely, towards God, our Neighbour, and our Selves.*

This I take to be the true notion and the just province of Religion ; but I can neither think it possible to handle all the parts of so vast a Subject in this short Treatise, nor indeed do I apprehend the discouraging of them all to be equally neces-

fary to those for whose use I principally intend these Papers. Therefore, omitting (but not excluding) all other branches of Religion, I will here only speak of these Three things :

*First*, Of Secret Devotion, or those Acts of Piety which are transacted only between Almighty God and a Man's own Soul.

*Secondly*, Of Private Piety, or the Exercises of Religion in every particular Family.

*Thirdly*, Of the more Publick Acts of Religion, and concerning a Man's governing himself so as to consult the Honour and Service of God, in the Parish wherein he lives.

I begin with the First, *viz.* Of Secret or Closet Devotion.

That this is an essential branch of True Religion, and a necessary and universal Duty, appears by the Command of our Saviour, *Mat. vi. 6. When thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut the door, pray to thy Father which is in secret, &c.* In which words it is not our Saviour's meaning to forbid or put a slight upon all but Closet Devotion, for he himself frequently prayed publicly, and taught his Disciples so to do : nor though he  
speak

ſpeak of a Cloſet, doth he intend to confine this Duty to the ſtrict formalities of a Cloſet, but that it may be done in the Fields, or in any reſeſs or place of ſecrecy whatſoever, as he himſelf practiſed : nor, laſtly, though he uſe the word *Prayer* only, doth he make that ſtrictly taken to be the whole office of ſecret Piety ; for it is uſual in the Scripture, and in common ſpeech alſo, to expreſs all the acts of immediate Worſhip by the name of *Prayer*, whether they be Praises, or Adorations, or Confessions, or Thankſgiving, or Meditation, or Self-examination : All therefore which our Saviour here intended, was to repreſent the neceſſity of ſecret Devotion as well as publick, and to preſs that upon his Diſciples which the hypocriſie and oſtentation of the Pharifees had laid aſide ; becauſe, in truth, they ſought not God's Glory, but their own.

And this is further recommended to us by the univerſal practice of all good Men, in all Ages and Countries of the World, and of whatſoever Opinion or Perſuaſion otherwiſe. There have, perhaps, been thoſe, who, under ſome pretence or other, have neglected Family-Worſhip, and thoſe alſo who have been abaſed by ſome Scruples into an omiſſion of Publick Worſhip ;

but I verily think that none but flat Atheists, or gross Hypocrites (which are much the same thing) could ever dispense with themselves in the common and habitual neglect of Secret Worship: for a Man cannot believe there is a God, or much less have any worthy apprehensions of him, but it naturally puts him upon some act or other of Adoration towards him.

Acts of Publick Worship are to the Soul as Exercise is to the Body; it may live and subsist, though not long and healthfully without it: but Secret Devotion is like the Motion of the Heart and Lungs, without which a Man is presently choaked up and destroyed; if his Heart do not move towards God, and as it were by circulation return in Praises all those Benefits which it continually receives from him, it is stifled by repletion; and if by Prayer he do not breathe out his griefs, and as it were ventilate his spirits, he is strangled by his own melancholy: for the publick performance of Religious Offices cannot make a supply in these cases; because every Man hath his secret sins to confess to God, which it is ordinarily unsafe to make other Men privy to, and his peculiar infirmities and temptations, his griefs and burdens, which it is in vain to lay open to Men,

Men, seeing only God can relieve them ; and every Man hath received sundry personal mercies and favours from the hands of God, in answer of his Prayers, which require a personal acknowledgment to the Divine Goodness. And the opening of a Man's heart in any of these cases, is commonly attended with such affections and passionate expressions as would be indecent to the eyes of Men, though they are very becoming towards God ; in respect of which last thing, we find, 1 *Sam.* i. 13. *Hannah* was thought to be drunk, by the holy and wise Man *Eli* the Priest, when yet, as the truth appeared afterwards, he saw in her only the devout symptoms of a sorrowful spirit.

Besides, these acts of Secret Worship are very necessary in order to Publick Worship, both as they dispose and fit a Man's Heart for it before he enters upon it, by composing the Thoughts, and raising the Affections ; and as they make application of it afterwards, pressing home upon the Conscience the Instructions there received, and improving and confirming into a stable Resolution those good Affections and Inclinations which were stirred up by it ; insomuch, that that Man will either have no mind to God's Publick Ser-

vice, or no suitable temper in it, or be little the better after it, that hath not first fitted and prepared his Heart for it by Secret Devotion. And herein lies the true reason, as well of the lamentable Unprofitableness, as of the common Irreverence of Publick Performances ; because Men rush into God's House without the due Preface of secret Preparation, and they turn their backs upon God when they depart from the Church, never attending to, or improving those good motions which the Spirit of God hath kindled in them.

Moreover, these devout offices of Religion, though they are by no means to supplant and supersede the publick, (as we have intimated already, and shall demonstrate at large by and by,) yet in some respects they are more acceptable to God than the other ; forasmuch as they are founded upon acknowledgment of his Omniscience, and demonstrate the great and intimate sense we have of the Divine Majesty, and consequently of this they give the greatest assurance to our own hearts, of our sincerity, and so are the most comfortable : for Publick Devotion may possibly have a great alloy of secular Interest, and may owe it self, in a great measure, to the Authority of Laws, or to pub-



publick Fame and Reputation ; but he that worships God in secret, where and when no Eye is privy but only that of God Almighty, is secure to himself, that he can have no mean or sinister end in so doing, nothing can move him to this, but the meer reverence of God ; and therefore our Saviour, in the fore-mentioned passage, *Mat. vi. 6.* lays an emphasis upon those words, *thy Father which is in secret ;* and adds this Encouragement of such Addresses to God, *Thy Father which seeth in secret, will reward thee openly.*

Upon all which Considerations, let the Man who either values God's Glory, or his own Improvement, Peace and Comfort, or indeed who makes any pretence to Religion, strictly make conscience of, and constantly practise secret Devotion : The Nature, Extent, Manner, Instances and Circumstances whereof, I am now further to explain in the following Particulars.

1. And I begin with that which is universally acknowledged, and so principal a part of Divine Worship, that (as I noted before) it is ordinarily put for the Whole ; I mean, *Prayer to God* ; touching the secret exercise whereof, let the good Christian take these following Directions :

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*First,*

*First*, Let him not fail, Night and Morning (at least) solemnly and devoutly to pray to God. Diverse holy Men we read of, who, according to the greatness of their Zeal, or urgency of the occasion for it, have prescribed to themselves stricter measures than this; particularly *David* saith, he would *worship God seven times in a day*; and *Daniel's* custom was, to do it *three times a day*, Dan. vi. 10. as seems also to have been that of the Primitive Christians: but less than twice a day I cannot find to agree with the practice of any good Men, unless either sickness disabled them, or some very extraordinary occasion diverted them: And it is wondrously fit and decorous, that we, who owe our whole time to God, should pay him the tribute of devoting those critical periods of it (I mean, Evening and Morning) to him, especially in consideration of the peculiar circumstances these two points of time are attended with, namely, in the Evening, having finished the course of that Day, and reflecting upon our infirmities in it, we cannot but observe by how many failings we have justly incurred God's displeasure, if he should severely animadvert upon us; and therefore have great cause to deprecate his  
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anger, and to make our peace with him : and we must needs also be sensible both how many dangers we have escaped, by his Providence, and how many instances of blessing we have received from his Goodness, and therefore have reason to praise and magnifie his Name ; and especially being then also to betake our selves to sleep, when, above all times, we are out of our own keeping, and are exposed to a thousand dangers from Thieves, from malicious Men, from violent Elements of Wind, Fire and Water, from the enterprizes of Evil Spirits, and frightful Dreams, and our own foolish Imaginations ; in which, and sundry other respects, *no man knows what a night may bring forth* ; and in consideration of which, he is a stupidly secure and fool-hardy Person, that doth not think it highly to be his interest, by peculiar addresses, to recommend himself and all his concerns to the watchful Eye of Providence, *which neither slumbers nor sleeps.*

And in the Morning, having not only by the guard of holy Angels been preserved from all those dangers which might have surprized us in the dark, and when our Senses were so lock'd up, that we could not help our selves, but refreshed  
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and recruited in all our powers by that admirable divine opiate sleep; nothing less can become us, than to consecrate anew all these restored powers to our Creator and Preserver, by hearty Adorations. Besides this, we are then sensible that we are now entring upon a new scene of business, where we shall be exposed to innumerable Accidents, Dangers, Difficulties and Temptations, none of which we are match for without Divine Assistance, and have therefore need to implore his Grace and good Providence before we encounter them; so that it is not timidity, or superstitious fear, but just wisdom, not to dare either to go to bed, or to set our foot out of doors, till we have recommended our selves to Almighty God by Prayer. And by so doing (as aforesaid) we maintain the *juge sacrificium*, and (in God's gracious interpretation, are said to) *pray continually*, and to consecrate our whole time to him; and besides, we keep up a lively and constant sense of him upon our hearts.

*Secondly*, Let him be sure that these Duties be done fervently, as well as constantly and frequently, not formally and customarily, without life and feeling of what a man is about, or with wandring thoughts,

thoughts, and distracted affections, but with the greatest vigour and intention of mind that is possible : for if a Man's Heart be flat and remiss in these special approaches to God, he will be sure to be much worse, and even loose and atheistical upon other occasions ; for these secret Duties are the special instruments and exercises of raising our hearts towards Heaven, and as it were the nicking up of our Watch to that cue in which we would have it go.

In the more publick Offices of Religion, the credit and reputation of it is principally concerned, and therefore they ought to be performed with all gravity and solemnity ; but the very life and soul of Piety lies in these secret Duties, and therefore they ought to be discharged with the quickest sense, and most inflamed affections, insomuch that a Man must not think he hath acquitted himself, when he hath repeated such or so many Prayers, until he find also his heart warmed, and his temper of mind raised and improved by them. To this purpose therefore, let him, in the entrance upon these Retirements, place himself under the Eye of God, and be apprehensive of the immediate Presence of the Divine Majesty, that this may give  
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check to all levity of spirit, and wandering of thoughts, and make him grave and reverential : Let him also, all along, be sensible of the great value and necessity of those things which he either begs of God, or returns thanks for, that this may render him ardent in his Desires, and affectionate in his Praises ; and whilst he perseveres in these Duties, let him join with them Reading and Meditation, not only to fix his Mind, but to prevent barrenness, and to impregnate and enrich his Soul with divine notions and affections. To this end,

*Thirdly*, Let him take care that he tempt not himself to flatness, by an affected length of these holy Duties ; for though it be a sign of an indevout temper, to be too compendious and concise in them, as if we grudged the time spent in God's service ; and although it be also irreverent towards God, to be so short and abrupt, as if we briefly dictated to him what we would have done ; yet it is to be guilty of the same fault, to be impertinently tedious with him, as if he could not understand us without many words, or would be wrought upon by tedious importunity.

Besides all this, it is to be considered, that often, *when the spirit is willing, the flesh*

*flesh is weak*, and that our Bodies cannot always correspond with our Minds: Now in such a case, to affect the prolonging of our Devotions, is to lose in the intention what we get in the extention of them; for it will be sure either to make us go unwillingly to our Duty, or to perform it very superficially; in either of which circumstances it is not likely we should be pleasing to God, or be able to make any comfortable reflections afterwards upon such performance.

The measures of Devotion therefore are not expressly prescribed by God, but are to be determined by a prudent respect to the peculiar constitution of the person, the condition of his affairs, and the extraordinariness of the occasion; and to go about to exceed these bounds, is an argument of intemperate zeal, which is never acceptable to God; and is so far injurious to a man's self, that it manifestly hinders what it pretends to promote. To these I add,

*Fourthly*, Let not the devout Man be very curious or solicitous about the form or expressions of his secret Duties; I mean, whether his Prayers be read out of a Book, or be the present conceptions of his own Mind, so long as they are offered up from an  
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understanding Soul, and an humble and affectionate Heart; for these are all the things that God looks at, and wherein his honour is directly concerned; and therefore as he hath no value for eloquence of speech on the one hand, so neither hath he for strength of memory, or for pregnancy and variety of fancy on the other; but only (as I said) that we worship him with our Understanding, and do not, like Parrots, utter words whereof we have no sense or notion; that we bring an humble and contrite Spirit, as sensible of the infinite distance between Him and us, and an Heart seriously affected with his Presence, and the nature and value of the things we are conversant about.

It is true, that a composed Form is most suitable to Publick Worship, where (as I noted before) the Dignity and Credit of Religion is concerned, and that, perhaps, in Private Duties, our present conceptions may most please and affect our selves; but our acceptance with God (especially in these secret Duties) depends neither upon the one nor the other, but upon those inward dispositions of the Soul aforesaid.

Wherefore, let no Man cheat himself into an opinion, that those heats of fancy, or transports of affection, which sometimes happen in conceived Prayer, are instances



stances of real and extraordinary Devotion ; or that because the use of a Form or Book may perhaps be destitute of such flights, therefore those Duties are dead and formal, forasmuch as those Services may be most acceptable to God, which are less pleasant to our selves ; since it is not those sudden flashes, but a constant and even fervour of Piety which he hath regard to. And this leads me to another Advice, namely,

*Fifthly,* Let the pious Man think himself obliged to *pray without ceasing*, and that he is never to lay aside or intermit the regular course of a daily Devotion, upon any pretence whatsoever, but especially not upon the absurd pretext of awaiting the motion of the Spirit : for although it be true, that the Spirit of God ceases not to move Men to their Duty, the way of the Spirit of God is not to move sensibly, and to make violent impressions upon us ; and therefore he that suspends the performance of his Duty till he is so jogged and stirred up to it, will never pray at all : And indeed, what reason can there be to expect such a thing, or what need of it in the case of a known Duty ? If it were the Will of God to put us upon some extraordinary service, then it were reasonable to expect

expect some special mandate or impulse upon our Spirits from him, which might both warrant the enterprize, and quicken us in the prosecution ; but in ordinary Duties, the motion of the Holy Spirit, in the Scripture, is and ought to be sufficient ; and he that will not be stirred up by that, doth but pretend to wait for a Spirit, in excuse of his own Atheism, Unbelief, or intolerable Slothfulness ; and in so doing, lays himself open to an evil Spirit, whose design it is to check and withdraw Men from Religion : And this is matter of sad and common experience, that from waiting for the motion of the Spirit, Men very usually grow first to frequent omissions, then to carelessness of their Duty, and at last to a total neglect of it.

Therefore, let not any Man slight a Regular and Methodical Devotion, as a meer formal and customary thing, since this is the very attainment of Piety, when that which is matter of Duty becomes also in a good sence customary and habitual : And he that out of such a temper performs the Duties of Religion constantly and reverently, gives far greater proof of sincere Christianity, than he that seems to himself to do them with greater heat and transport, but needs from time to time

time be jogged and provoked to the performance.

*Sixthly*, To all these, I add, in the last place, That it is very advisable, though not absolutely necessary, that in these secret Devotions, a Man should (where it may done with privacy, and without ostentation, or such other impediment) pray vocally and audibly; for although God knows our Hearts, and observes all our Thoughts, and the motions of our Affections before we express them, and therefore needs not that we should interpret our minds to him by words; yet it is fit we should employ all the powers and capacities we have in his service, our Bodies as well as our Souls, and our Lips as well as our Hearts. Besides, though we cannot affect God with the tone and accents of our speech, yet we often-times affect our own Hearts the more, and raise them a note higher in concord with the elevation of our Voices: but that which I principally intend, is this, *viz.* by the harmony of our Tongue and Voice, our Hearts are as it were charmed into the greater composure and intention upon that we are about. And so whereas it is the usual complaint, especially of melancholy and thoughtful Persons, that their Hearts are  
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apt to rove and wander in these secret Duties of Religion, by this means we have it very much in our power to keep them from extravagancy, and at once to make our Devotions the less tedious to our selves, and the more acceptable to God.



## CHAP. II.

### *Of several other Instances of Secret Devotion.*

**T**Hough *Prayer* be the most general Duty of Religion, the common Instrument of all Piety, and the most immediate Address to God; yet it is a great mistake to make it the only Instance of Secret Devotion, for there are several others of great moment; amongst which, I reckon, in the next place,

2. *Study and Meditation*; not only to direct and assist our *Prayers*, (of which I said something before,) but especially to cultivate and improve our own Minds, that we may be wiser, and consequently both more capable of doing God better service in this World, and also fitter for the society of Angels, and the conversation of  
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*the spirits of just men made perfect* in the other World. For we are to consider, that God Almighty hath set a mighty value upon our Souls, in redeeming them by no less a price than the Blood of his only Son; and therefore we should be intolerably ingrateful towards him, if we bestow no cost upon them, but live as if we were meer Matter and Body, and take care only to please and gratifie our Senses, and in the meantime abandon our Minds to folly and ignorance, to sloth and superstition. *We are to consider also,* that the same Infinite Goodness hath by the same purchase delivered us from the fear of Eternal Death, which otherwise would have kept us in perpetual bondage, and so have contracted our Spirits, and rendred our very selves so inconsiderable to our selves, that no Man could have had the heart to take any care of himself, but would be tempted to have lived like a Beast, because he expected to die like one, or worse; but now that we are made to hope for Immortality, and to live for ever and ever, there is great reason a Man should spare no cost, no labour and pains about himself, since he may reap the fruit, and enjoy the comfort of so doing in the better enjoyment of himself a thousand Ages hence, and to all  
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Eternity. Moreover, the same Divine Goodness hath designed us to a glorious estate of Happiness in his own Kingdom of Heaven, a state of intellectual Pleasure, and the most sublimed ingredients of Felicity, which a dull, sottish and sensual Soul can never be capable of perceiving, if he were placed in the midst of them; and therefore he is more than brutish, that doth not dispose himself so, that *he may be meet to partake of that inheritance with the saints in light.*

To all this we are to consider, that the general Apostacy of Mankind hath weaken'd our Natures, clouded our Understanding, and disorder'd all our Powers; and together herewith, the foolish Opinions and Traditions of the World have abused and deceived us yet more and more, so that we must be most silly and unhappy Creatures, if we do not endeavour to deliver and disengage our selves from both these Calamities. And the case is not totally irreparable in respect of either of these mischiefs, if we be not wanting to our selves; for to the intent that we might in some measure recover our selves, it hath pleased God to give us time to consider in privacy and retirement from the noise of the World, that we may recollect our  
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selves; he hath set before us his Works and Providence to meditate upon; we have his holy Scriptures to enlighten our Minds, and guide us out of the perplexed state of things we enjoy, the Publick Ministry, and abundance of good Books to help us to understand those Scriptures; and above all, we are assured of the assistances of his holy Spirit, against the weakness and confusion of our own Understandings.

So that as there is great reason and great necessity that we should apply our selves to Study and Meditation; so we have as great encouragement to hope for success in so doing: for by application of our selves to the means aforesaid, we may not only rid our selves of that wildness and ferity which is ordinarily upon our natures, but out-grow vulgar Opinion and Tradition, and come to be able to make a true estimate of things set before us; we may greaten our Spirits, so as to despise those little things which silly Men doat upon; we may free our Minds of childish fears, and unaccountable superstitions; we may understand the true reason of Religion, the loveliness of Vertue, and, in a word, have worthier notions of God, and clearer apprehensions of the World to come.

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And although it be acknowledged, that all Men are not alike capable of these Improvements, either by reason of the weakness of their Minds, or the unhappy constitution of their Bodies, or the perplexed condition of their outward Affairs ; yet certainly God Almighty hath, by the means aforesaid, put it into every Man's power to be wiser than he is, if he would but apply himself to the use of them, and therefore let the devout Man be sure to make the experiment.

To further him the more wherein, let him, to all the considerations foregoing, add these two following. First, That forasmuch as he was made in God's Image, it is no less than a contempt of the Divine Majesty, to have no regard to the cultivating and adorning that part of himself wherein he especially resembles his Maker ; and consequently it will appear to him to be a very fit and proper instance of Worship towards God, to improve his own Soul ; and therefore it is here justly placed among the expressions of Devotion. Secondly, Let him consider, that the great game of Eternity is but once to be play'd, and that there is no retrieving of our neglects and carelessness afterwards ; therefore there is all the reason in the World that



we should play it intently and warily : my meaning is, that therefore we ought to redeem time from folly and sensuality, and apply it to the advantage of our Souls; and he that doth so, and begs God's blessing upon it, will undoubtedly find his Mind enlarged, his Life more regular, and his Spirit more comfortable, which are all the chief ends of Devotion.

3. The next Instance of Secret Devotion ( for I am not curious in what order I place them ) shall be the exercise of *Faith in God*, and dependance upon him, in pursuance of an acknowledgment that He alone governs the World, and the framing a Man's heart to take notice of him, to have recourse to him, and stay it self upon him in all exigencies, and accidents, and passages whatsoever, that he may impute nothing to chance, fate, or the stars, but possess himself with a deep and settled apprehension of the great Interest of God in all revolutions or occurrences.

This is a point of great and real honour to the Divine Majesty, as it sets God always before us, and places him continually in our eye, as it brings us to an entire resignation of our selves to his dispose, and puts us into a constant gravity and a reverence towards him, as it provokes us to address

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our selves to him upon all occasions, to pray to him, to trust in him, to walk humbly and thankfully before him. And it is of mighty advantage to our selves, as it strengthens and fortifies our weak Spirits, by the contemplation of that mighty Providence we are under, and that we are protected by a Wise, and Good, and Powerful Being, whom nothing can be too hard for, and who is liable to no surprize or mistake, as it assures us that nothing befalls without him, and therefore every thing is ordained for wise ends, and shall be turned to good in the conclusion; this also enables us to be contented in every condition, secure against all fears, and to arrive at such an evenness of spirit, that we shall not be tost with every accident, hurried by every emergency, but possess our selves in patience and tranquility.

And consequently this must needs be a very worthy entertainment of our Retirements, and such as deserves and requires the application of our Minds to it, that we may be under the power of this Persuasion, and be able to answer to our selves the atheistical objections against it, to give some account of the intricacy and obscure passages of Providence, without (some skill in) which it will be very difficult, if  
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not impossible, to walk either piously or comfortably ; but by this exercise we hold continual conversation with God, we live and walk with him, he is always at hand to us, to awe us, to support and comfort us, and our hearts become not only a Temple where we solemnly offer up our Services at set-times to him, but an Altar where the holy fire never goes out, but sends up constantly the sweet odours of Prayers and Praises to him.

4. Another Exercise of Secret Devotion, is, to premeditate our Conversation ; and so to fore-cast the occurrences of life, that we may conduct our selves both with safety to our Souls, and to the best advantage of our spiritual Interests ; forasmuch as he that lives *ex tempore* (as we say) and unpremeditatedly, will neither be able to avoid the Dangers which will be sure to encounter him, nor to improve the Opportunities which may offer themselves to him.

In our converse in this World we must expect temptations from the Devil, allurements from sensual objects, provocations from the folly or malice of evil men, vexations by unhappy accidents, and above all, abundance of evil examples to debauch and corrupt us ; and that Man will most cer-

tainly be surprized by some or all of these, that doth not fore-cast them, and arm himself against them: and therefore a wise Man will not adventure to go abroad and take in the infectious air of the World, till he hath antidoted himself against the danger, by the advantages of retirement, and the secret exercises of Devotion.

To this purpose, he will, before he goes out of his Closet, not only consider the common calamities of the world, the reigning sins of the age, but the especial difficulties of his calling and profession, and the peculiar infirmities of his own temper; and withal, will forethink and prepare himself against such efforts as by reason of any of these may be made upon him.

If he can foresee, that he shall unavoidably fall into evil Company, he will first endeavour to warm and affect his heart with the quicker sense of Religion, that he may not only take no hurt himself, but (if it be possible) imprint some sense of good upon those he converses with.

If any thing be likely to happen that will strike him with melancholy, he will first go to God, by Prayer, for strength and constancy of Mind, and endeavour to fix his Heart so intently upon another World, as that the occurrences of this may not discompose him.

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If he be likely to meet with that which may provoke him to anger, he will compose himself to as great a coolness as possibly he can, that no passage may inflame him.

If any allurements to sensuality present it self, he will consider how he may retreat into grave company, or earnest business, that so he may decline that which is not easily to be withstood.

And on the other side, concerning opportunities of doing or receiving good; forasmuch as every wise Man is sensible that the seasons of things are no more in his power, than the time of his life is; that no enterprize succeeds well, which is not nick'd with a fit season, and that it is impossible to recall it when it is slip'd by; therefore the pious Man will forethink what may offer themselves probably in such circumstances as he stands in, lest he should overlook them when they present, and so he lose an advantage of doing glory to God, or good to Men, and of promoting the interest of his own Soul, and accordingly will dispose his Heart in secret to apprehend them, and to improve them; he examines his capacity, and stirs up his attention, and projects the means, either how he may reap some benefit by good and wise Company, or how he may seasonably inter-

pose a word on God's behalf in common Conversation, or how he may do some good thing that will turn to account another day.

5. But if either by the neglect of such opportunities as aforesaid, the pious Man omit the doing of some good he might have done, or by security of conversation he fall into any of those dangers he ought to have watch'd against, then there is a Fifth great work for private Devotion: for in this case there lies a double care upon him; first, that he slight not his danger; and secondly, that he despair not of remedy, but be both deeply sensible of his miscarriage, and also rise again with indignation and resolution.

First, That he slight not his fault (as generally Men do by the plea of Example, or the pretence of Humane Infirmary) and so harden himself in his sin, but feel a deep remorse, and conceive a mighty displeasure against himself for it.

Secondly, That, on the other side, he aggravate not his guilt to such a degree, as to preclude repentance, by despairing of the Divine Mercy, but presently flee to the Grace of the Gospel, and implore God's pardon, with settled purposes never to offend in the like kind again.

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Now, neither of these are done as they ought to be, but in retirement, *viz.* when a Man hath opportunity of dealing impartially between God and his own Soul, and therefore (especially because the occasions of them often happen) are justly reckonable as a part of Closet Devotion, and accordingly they are represented by the holy Psalmist, *Psal. iv. 4. Stand in awe and sin not : commune with your own hearts in your chamber, and be still, &c.*

Wherefore, let every Man that hath any sense of God upon him, be thoroughly persuaded to set some time apart for this purpose, that he may romage his own heart, and find out all the evils of his life; and when he hath discovered any particular guilt upon his soul, let him not forsake his Closet, and depart out of God's presence, till he have affected himself with deep sorrow and contrition for his sin, and prostrated himself at the Throne of Grace with strong and earnest cries for pardon, and until he have confirmed his heart in a resolution of watchfulness and more strict obedience for the time to come.

And let him do this often, that he may not run up too big a score, and so either his Heart *become hardened through the deceitfulness of sin*, or his Conscience be so affrighted

frighted with the greatness of his guilt, that, like a Bankrupt, he be tempted to decline looking into his Accompts, because he can have no comfortable prospect of them, or run away from God in a fit of desperation, instead of running to him by repentance.

Let him, I say, do this often, not by chance or unwillingly, but frequently and periodically (set-times being appointed for it;) and though I would be loth to impose a burden upon the Consciences of Men, yet I think it ordinarily very advisable, that this be done once a month, *viz.* whilst a Man hath his past actions and carriage in remembrance, and can take a just account of himself, but especially it is very fit to do it against the time of the administration of the Holy Sacrament, and then would be extraordinarily proper and seasonable: for these two things, Self-examination, and partaking of the Lord's Supper, do marvellously suit and answer to each other; the former preparing a man's heart for that sacred solemnity, and that holy solemnity sealing to him the pardon of those sins he hath discovered and repented of in secret.

But whether this work of Self-reflection, and ransacking a Man's own Heart in secret, be absolutely necessary to be done at certain



tain times and periods, it is wonderfully useful, that it be seriously and conscientiously practised some time or other ; forasmuch as on the one side it is not conceivable how a Man should be able to maintain an Holy and Comfortable Life without it ; so, on the other hand, it seems equally impossible that he should continue to be an evil Man, who habitually and sincerely practises it : for as there is no way so effectual to preserve an Estate from being squandred away extravagantly, as the keeping constant and strict Accompts of Receipts and Expences, so there is no method more powerful to restrain Sin, than this of Self-examination ; the very searching into our hearts jogs and awakens Conscience, and that being rouzed, will be a faithful Monitor of all that was done amiss, the meer prospect of which will make a Man very uneasie, by the fears and horrors that attend it ; the consideration of the silly motives upon which a Man was induced to sin, will fill him with ingenuous shame and indignation ; and the easiness (which he cannot but find ) of withstanding such motions, by the grace of God, will provoke him to a resolution of amendment : in a word, the sight and knowledge of the Disease, is a great step to the Cure ;

and an Heart well searched, is half healed. But this leads me to another Instance of great affinity with what we have now been speaking of, and which shall be the last exercise of Secret Devotion which I will here make mention of, *viz.*

6. Trial of our Proficiency and Growth in Grace. This is of great importance, forasmuch as (we have seen before) the truth of Grace is scarcely any other way discernible but by its progress, and in that it makes Men daily better and better; for the essences of things are indiscernible, and a Man may endlessly dispute with himself whether such or such a thing be a sign of grace, and of spiritual life in him, till he puts all out of controversie by the fruits and improvement of such a vital principle; and therefore it is extremely necessary, if we will arrive at spiritual comfort, that we make experiment of our selves in this particular; which can no otherwise be done, than by retirement into the Cabinet of our Hearts, and the diligent comparing our selves both with our selves and with the Rules of the Gospel.

The common estimation of the World, is a very fallacious and improper measure of divine life, and, as the Apostle tells us, it is *a small thing to be judged of men*, one way

way or other ; *but if our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God :* for they being privy to our ends and designs, and to all our circumstances, as well as to matter of fact, cannot, nor will not deceive us, if they be secretly examined ; and therefore must be impartially consulted, if we would indeed know our selves, and be able to pre-judge our own condition.

Now the testimony which our hearts can give us of our spiritual improvement, is not to be grounded upon the encreased length of our Prayers, nor meerly from the passion and earnestness of them ; for the former of these may be the effect of hypocrisie, and the latter may proceed from some peculiar temper of body, or outward accident ; nor upon our affectionate hearing of Sermons ; for, *the stony ground received the seed with joy, as well as the good ground ;* nor yet upon a more than ordinary scrupulosity of Conscience (especially in smaller matters,) for this may proceed from ignorance, superstition or hypocrisie. But the safest decision of this great case, whether we grow in grace or no, is to be made by examining our hearts in such points as these following, *viz.* Whether we be more constant in all the Duties of Religion than formerly ? Whether we  
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be more exact and regular in our Lives daily? Whether our Hearts be more in Heaven than they were wont, and that we have arrived at a greater contempt of the World? Whether we are more dead to Temptation, especially in the case of such sins as agree with our constitution and circumstances? Whether Affliction be more easie than it used to be, and we can better submit to the Yoke of Christ? Whether we are more conscientious of secret sins, and such as no Eye of Man can take notice of and upbraid us for? Whether we are more sagacious in apprehending, and more careful of improving opportunities of doing good than heretofore? In a word, Whether we are grown more meek, more humble and obedient to our Superiors, &c.

If, upon due enquiry, our hearts can answer affirmatively for us in such points as these, then we may comfortably conclude, that we have not *received the grace of God in vain*; which being of unspeakable consequence to us to be substantially resolved of, Self-examination in the aforesaid particulars (as the only way to arrive at it) ought to have its share in our Closet Devotions.

C H A P. III.

*Of Family-Piety in general.*

**T**Hough the consideration of God's Almighty Power, Wisdom, Goodness, and his other Perfections, together with our dependance upon him, and obnoxiousness to him, be the first reason and ground of Religion (as we have already shewed) and so the Divine Majesty is the immediate and principal Object of it; yet notwithstanding, this is not so to be understood, as if the obligations of Religion extended no further than to acts of worship or address to God: for it is as much our duty to manage our selves well towards others for God's sake, as towards him for his own sake. And therefore (as hath been intimated heretofore) true Piety, in its just dimensions, comprizes no less than a worthy discharge of our selves in all those relations Divine Providence hath placed us in.

Now, next to our obligations to our Creator and Preserver, and next to our concern for the better part of our selves, our own Souls, a Man stands related to his Family so nearly, that he is wanting  
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in both the former, that is negligent of this.

Almighty Wisdom and Goodness pronounced it not fit for Man to be alone, and therefore the first provision he made against the uncomfortable state of solitude, was, to enter him into the society of a Family ; partly, that in so near a station, they might mutually relieve and help one another in difficulties, entertain one another by discourse, and improve one another's reason ; partly, that in this conjunction they might fortifie one another's spirits against all ill accidents, or the enterprizes of wicked and malicious spirits, more powerful than themselves ; but principally, that they might mutually provoke and inflame one another's hearts to admiration, love and reverence of their Great Creator.

And this end is so great, and the injunction of it so strict, that every Man in this Society stands charged with the Soul of another, and is accountable for it, at least so far, that he cannot be excusable, that doth not endeavour to bring those with whom he so intimately converses, and upon whom he hath so many opportunities, to a sense and regard of God and Religion. And this especially concerns those that are Heads of Families ; forasmuch as by virtue  
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of their Place, they have always been accounted not only Kings and Governors, but also Prophets and Priests, within their peculiar sphere and province.

Accordingly we find it to have been the constant care and practice of all good Men, in all Ages, to train up those of their Families in the knowledge of the True God, and the exercises of True Religion; particularly God himself testifies of *Abraham*, Gen. 18, --- 19. that *he knew he would command his children, and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, &c.*

And *Job* i. 5. we find it to have been the continual care of that holy Man, to sanctifie his Children and Family, and daily to intercede with God for them by Sacrifice.

*Deut.* vi. 6. it is an express injunction upon the Children of *Israel*, that they not only *keep the laws of God in their own hearts, but that they should teach them diligently to their children, and talk of them when they sat in their houses, and when they walked by the way, &c. i. e.* that they should convey and imprint a sense of God and his Religion upon the minds of those they familiarly conversed with.

And so great is the Authority and Influence of Governors of Families, and so power-

powerful is good Example in this particular, that *Joshua, chap. xxiv. 15.* undertakes for his Family, *that they should serve the Lord*, whether other People would do so or no.

*David* often declares his zeal for the maintenance of Religion in his Family, so far, that he resolves those Persons should be excluded his House, that made no conscience of God; and most remarkably, *1 Chron. xxviii. 9.* he gives this solemn charge to his Son *Solomon*, *Thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart, and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imagination of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever.*

And for the times of the New Testament, there is abundant evidence, that it was the constant practice of all those who had a sense of Religion in their hearts, to set it up in their Families also; of which the testimonies are so many, and so ready at hand, that it is needless here to recite them; and the success was commonly answerable to the endeavour: from whence it comes to pass, that *Act. x. 2.* it is said of *Cornelius*, that he was not only a *devout* man,



man, and prayed to God always, but that he feared the Lord, with all his house; i. e. his Example, Prayers and Instruction prevailed upon all those that were under the influence of them, to bring them to (at least) a profession of Piety also. Upon which account, it is further observable, that generally when any Governour of a Family embraced the Christian Faith, and was converted to that Religion, it is said that such an one *believed, and all his house, or, he and all his house were baptized*, namely, because truly good Men did not fail, by their example and endeavours, to bring those over to the same Religion which themselves were heartily persuaded of; and accordingly we see it often come to pass in these times wherein we live, that several Persons very heartily bless God that his Providence disposed them into such or such pious Families wherein the foundation of their eternal happiness hath been laid, by the means of the instructive and exemplary devotion which they have there been under the advantages of. Upon consideration of all which Reasons, Examples and Encouragements, and several others which might with great ease have been added, let no good Christian be of so monastick a spirit, as to extend his  
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care no farther than his own Cell, and to think he hath acquitted himself well enough, when he hath discharged the offices of his Closet, and hath kept Religion glowing in his own heart ; but think it is his duty to take care that his light shine quite through his House, and that his zeal warm all his Family.

In order to which, we will here consider these three things : *First*, Of the several Members which usually a Family consists of, and which are concerned in its discipline. *Secondly*, The several Duties of Piety which especially become and concern a Family. And, *Thirdly*, By what means the Members of a Family may be brought to comply with all those Duties.

1. First, The ordinary Relations of a Family ( especially as it signifies those which dwell or converse together under the same roof ) are Husband and Wife, Parent and Children, Master and Servant, Friend and Friend ; and all these I take to be comprized in those several passages of the *Acts of the Apostles*, where it is said, that such a man *and all his house were converted*, or *baptized* ; for there are great interests of Religion which intercede between every of these : As for the Relation of Husband and Wife, as it is the nearest  
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and strictest that can be, so consequently it is of mighty importance to their mutual comfort, and a wonderful endearment of affections, when both the relatives are animated with the same spirit of Religion, and promote the eternal interest of one another : As it is vastly mischievous and unhappy, when those who are inseparably yoked together, draw divers ways, one towards Heaven, and the other towards Hell ; in respect of which danger, the Apostle advises those who are free, *not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers*, 2 Cor. vi. 14. for saith he, *What fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness ? what communion hath light with darkness ? what concord hath Christ with Belial ? and what part hath he that believeth with an infidel ?* Yet because it is possible, that Light may prevail against Darkness, therefore when such an unequal society is contracted, he doth not think it a sufficient ground for separation ; for saith he, 1 Cor. vii. 16. *What knowest thou, O wife, but thou mayest save thy husband ? or what knowest thou, O man, whether thou shalt save thy wife ?* especially since by the piety of one of the Parents, the Children are sanctified, and placed under the advantages of the Covenant of Grace, as he there adds, *ver. 14.*

And

And seeing it is possible for one of these Relatives to be so great a blessing to the other, there is mighty reason they both should endeavour it, out of self-love, as well as charity and conjugal affection; since it is both very difficult to go to Heaven alone, and also equally easie and comfortable, when those in this relation join hearts and hands in the way thither.

As for the relation of Parents and Children, that is also very near and intimate, and consequently their interest and happiness is bound up together; for as it is a mighty advantage to have holy Parents, in regard the Posterity of such Persons ordinarily fare the better to many Generations, as is assured in the Second Commandment; and therefore there is a double obligation upon Parents to be good and vertuous, not only for the sake of their own Souls, but also for the sake of their Children; so, on the other hand, it is no less glory and comfort to Parents to have good and pious Children, and therefore they are strictly charged to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord: and indeed, he is worse than an Infidel, nay, worse than a Brute, that can be content to bring them up to Hell and the Devil; for they are part of our  
selves;

of themselves ; and a Man that considers any thing, can as well be willing to be damn'd to himself, as that they should be so, if he can help it. Now, that there is much in their power this way, appears by that charge of the Apostle last named, as also by the observation of *Solomon*, Prov.xxii. 6. *Train up a child in the way he should go ; and when he is old, he will not depart from it :* for Children, in their young and tender years, are like Wax, yielding and pliable to whatsoever form we will put them into ; but if we miss this opportunity, it will be no easie matter to recover them to good afterwards, when they are debauched by evil principles, confident of their own opinions, head-strong by the uncontrouled use of liberty, and hardened by the custom of sinning. And therefore it is observable, that far the most part of good Men and Women are such as had the foundations of Piety laid in their youth, and very few are to be found who were effectually reclaimed afterwards.

But whilst Children wholly depend upon their Parents, and their natures are soft and pliant, when as yet they have not the hardiness to rebel, nor the confidence to dispute the commands of their Fathers, so long they may, by the grace of God, easily be

be wrought upon to good ; and, which is very remarkable, the influence of the Mother is especially considerable in this case : for so we find not only that King *Lemuel*, *Prov.* xxxi. 1. remembred the Lessons which his Mother taught him ; but, as I have noted before, *Timothy* was seasoned with grace, by the instructions of his Mother *Eunice*, and his Grand-mother *Lois*, *2 Tim.* i. 5. and many other instances there are of the successfulness of the Mothers pious endeavours. But where Parents neglect their duty, usually the Children perish, and their blood will be required at the hands of careless Parents : and, which is more, there is commonly this dreadful token of Divine Vengeance in this World, that those who are careless of their duty both towards God, and towards their Children in this particular, feel the sad effects of it in the undutifulness, contumacy and rebellion of those Children against themselves afterwards, as if God permitted them to revenge his quarrel.

In the next place, As for the relation of Master and Servants, it is a mighty mistake to think they are meerly our Slaves to do our will, and that nothing is due from us to them, but what is expressly bargain'd for ; since they are or ought to be

be God's Servants as well as ours, and must do Him service as well as us ; and they are put under our protection, and placed in our Families, that they may be instructed in his pleasure, and have the liberty to serve *him, of whom the whole family of heaven and earth is called.* So that, properly speaking, we and they are common Servants to one great Master, only in different ranks, as the one part ( after the manner of Stewards ) is allowed to have Servants under them, and the other must do the inferiour business, but still they are God's Servants more properly than ours, and must therefore have not only ( as I said ) liberty and leisure to serve our common Master, but also instructions from us, and encouragement so to do ; and he that denies them any of these, might as justly deny them their Bread or their Wages ; nay more, he that forgets to pray for them too, remembers himself but by halves, forasmuch as his interest is concerned not only in their health and prosperity, but in their vertue and piety : for it is evident, that the better Men they are, the better Servants they will prove. So *St. Paul* tells *Philemon*, in his Epistle to him, that he would be a Gainer by *Onesimus's* Conversion, for that he would be  
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so much a more profitable Servant henceforth, as he was now become a better Man; such Persons being not only the most faithful and trusty, but by so much the more industrious as they are the more conscientious: Besides that it is well known that Divine Providence often blesses a Family, for the sake of a pious Servant; as God blessed *Laban's* substance, for the sake of *Jacob*; and the house and all the affairs of *Potiphar*, for the Piety of *Joseph*. So that, in short, he loves himself as little as he loves God, who doth not endeavour that his Servants should be sincerely religious. And though, it's true, it is not altogether in his power to make them so, or to put grace into their hearts; yet, by virtue of his Place, and Authority, he hath mighty advantages of doing them good, and will be sure to be called to account how he hath improved his Stewardship in this particular.

Lastly, In a Family, there are commonly some, who, under the general relation of Friends or Acquaintance, are either resident in it, or at least hospitably entertained by it: Now, as this lays an obligation upon the Persons treated, so it gives some authority to him who treats them; and consequently, as such a Master of a  
Family,



Family, is in some measure answerable towards Men, for the scandal and misdemeanours of his Guests ; so is he much more responsible to God, for any profaneness they shall be guilty of towards his Divine Majesty. For (as I said before) every Man being King in his own Family, may give Laws to it, and oblige those who are under his protection, to pay him Allegiance, and to serve and worship God with him ; especially he ought to do this, because the Fourth Commandment requires at our hands, that we use this authority, not only over *our Sons and Daughters, our Manservants and Maid-servants*, but over *all those that are within our gates*.

But so much in the general ; let us now consider, in the second place, the particular Duties of Religion in a Family ; of which in the next Chapter.

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## C H A P. VI.

### *Of Family Duties in special.*

**I**N the first place, I look upon it as the Duty of every Family, that (besides Closet-Devotions, of which I have spoken before ; and besides Publick-Worship, of which

which I shall speak anon ) once a day, at the least, they join together in Prayers to God. I say, once a day at the least, in favour of Mens occasions, and the peculiar circumstances of some Families ; were it not for which, it would be very fit that there should be Prayers Morning and Evening, as is the general practice of most pious Families ; but certainly it is wonderfully decent, that all the Members of every Family should once in the day meet together, and with one heart and one mouth glorifie God, and pay their homage to the Great Master of Heaven and Earth ; and it is very strange, if any excuse shall be pleaded or admitted in this case. For, as I said before, every Family is a peculiar Body or Society, which hath its distinct circumstances, effects and consideration ; it hath its respective needs to be supplied, and therefore hath occasion to make proper and peculiar requests to God, as that he will be pleased to continue it in health, to settle concord and unity amongst the several Members of it, that the Whole may enjoy prosperity and safety from Thieves, from Fire, and other Dangers. And every such Society hath also proper and peculiar Mercies to give thanks to God for, as namely, for success in affairs, for quiet

quiet habitation, that they are not molested with ill Neighbours, nor vexed with Law-Suits, for hopeful Children, faithful Servants, &c. for in several of these respects, a Man may be well and comfortable in his own Person, and yet be unhappy in the Society ; and contrariwise, the Society or Family may be happy in the general, and yet a particular Person may be in ill circumstances : and therefore there is just reason of Addresses and Acknowledgments to God in relation to the Family, and by the whole Family in conjunction, as well as by every single Person apart, and in his Closet.

And though, perhaps, there may be some Family wherein there is no Person who can aptly and properly represent the peculiar concerns of it to the Almighty, and it may be also there is no form of Prayer at hand that will express all the respective circumstances of such a Society ; yet they may lift up their hearts and voices together in a general Form, and supply with their thoughts and affections whatsoever is wanting in the expressions.

And as there is just ground and reason for such Family-Worship, so there is good cause to expect it will be singularly successful, when the whole community joins

together, and present themselves and their tribute of praise before the Lord : no question but the very manner of doing it, as well as the matter, will be highly acceptable to him ; and when, with prostrate Bodies, devout Hearts, and Hands and Eyes lift up to Heaven, they combine together to importune, and as it were, besiege the Almighty, they cannot fail of a Blessing ; or however, it is a mighty satisfaction to the minds of all such Persons, and a great security to them, that they have thus jointly and solemnly commended themselves to the Divine protection.

Besides, that this course is an effectual means to conciliate peace and love and kindness between all the Members of this Body, and to knit their hearts to one another, when they are thus accustomed to unite their hearts and join their hands in God's service, and to conspire to pray with and for each other, which is the the greatest endearment of affection.

Perhaps some Man will now say, There is no express Scripture which requires of Men this daily Office of Family-Prayer : To which I answer, First, What if it were so, yet nevertheless it is a Duty, seeing there is so apparent reason for it. For God, who considered, that he gave Laws  
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to reasonable Men, did not think himself bound to prescribe every thing in particular, especially in Natural Worship, where the Reason of Man might supply him with direction what was fit to be done in such a case.

Besides, Secondly, (as I discoursed in the former Part of this Treatise,) It is a stingy and narrow-soul'd trick, and an argument of no true love to God and Goodness, to stand upon so strict terms in our piety, as to require an express Command in particular, for that which is admirably good in the general, and hath also been the general practice of all good Men, as this hath been.

But after all, I would, in the last place, crave leave to ask those Men a plain question, who insist upon more express proof of Family Prayers, and it is no more but this, Whether they think there is any such thing as Publick Worship required of Men? If they do, then let them remember there was a time when there was no more publick Society than that of Families, namely, at the first planting of the World, and then either Publick Worship must be this of Families, or none at all; and to enlighten them in this case, let them consider that passage, *Gen. iv. 26.* when *Seth*

had *Enoch* born to him, it is said, *Then began men to call upon the name of the Lord*; that is, so soon as there began to be a Family in the pious line of *Seth*, then presently they set up God's Worship in it. Now this was not the beginning of secret Worship, for no doubt but *Seth* was careful of that, before *Enoch* was born; nor was it properly Publick or Ecclesiastick Worship; for in that minority of the World, there neither was nor as yet could be any Church established in such a sence: therefore it must follow, that Family-Worship is as ancient as the being of Families themselves.

Or, let pious and ingenuous Persons consider of that passage of the Gospel, *Luk. xi. 1.* where, in the first place, we find our Saviour was at Prayers; and that it was not secret Prayer, but with his Disciples, is more than probable, since they were present at them; and accordingly, when he had concluded, one of them asks him to instruct them how to pray. Now if this be acknowledged, then here is our Saviour's Example for what we are discoursing of, forasmuch as the Disciples with whom he was at Prayer, were his Family. But that which I observe farther, is, they ask him to teach them to pray,

pray, as *John* taught his Disciples ; that is, to prescribe them a Form, wherein they (who were his Family) might join together, as the Family or Disciples of *John* did ; or not only to pray severally or secretly, but in conjunction and society : and this our Saviour gratifies them in, by prescribing to them the well-known and admirable Form : In which these two things are farther remarkable to this purpose ; First, That the Prayer is in the Plural Number ; which renders it far more probable, that it was intended for a social office. For though some other account may be given of his using that Number, yet nothing is so natural as this reason which I have intimated. Secondly, The very Petitions themselves (if they be considered) will encline a Man to think, that though the Prayer was contrived with infinite wisdom to fit other purposes, yet it was primarily intended for the use of a Family or Society, especially such an one as this of our Saviour's Disciples was : But so much for that.

2. The next instance of Family Duty, is, the sanctification of the Lord's-Day, and other Days and Times set apart for his service. As for the Lord's-Day, though it be undoubtedly true, that as the Jewish

Sabbath (which is our *Saturday*) is not obliging to Christians at all, so neither are we bound to observe any Day with that sabbatical nicety and strictness which (for special reasons) was required of that People ; yet that the First Day of the Week, or the Lord's-Day, be observed piously and devoutly, is recommended to us by the constant practice of the Christian Church.

And the sanctification of it principally consists in this, that we make it a Day peculiar for the offices of Piety and Devotion, as other days are for common and secular affairs : for though the business of Religion must be carried on every day of our lives, and that be a profane day indeed in which God hath not some share allowed for his service ; yet as God hath not required that it be the whole work of those days, but after a little of the time be consecrated to him, the residue be applied to the common affairs of life ; so, on the Lord's-Day, we are allowed to consult our infirmity, to provide for necessity, and to do works of humanity or mercy : but the proper business of the Day is Religion, and to that the main of it must be applied.

And there is great reason for this, namely, by this interruption of the course of worldly affairs, in some measure to take



take our hearts off from them; for we should hardly avoid sinking absolutely into the cares and business of this life, if we went on in a continual course, and were not obliged at certain intervals of time to retreat from them, and betake our selves to things of another nature; by which means also we begin to practise an Heavenly Sabbatism, and inure our selves, by degrees, to those spiritual employments which we are to enter upon, and be everlastingly performing in another World.

Let therefore the pious Man thus sanctifie the Lord's-Day, by applying it to holy uses, that is, (besides Publick Worship) to Reading, Meditation, Singing of Psalms, and grave Discourses of Religion; and let him, according as he hath warrant from the Fourth Commandment, oblige *all those within his gates* to do so too, and not only restrain his Family from common labours, but from lightness and folly, tippling and gossiping, idle visits, and impertinent talking of News; and use his endeavour to engage them to be as much in earnest about the service of God and their Souls on that Day, as they are about their business or pleasure on other days.

As for the other Holy-days set apart by the appointment of the Church, there is very good use to be made of them too: for besides, that the great Festivals are the ignorant Man's Gospel, and bring to his mind all the great passages of our Saviour and his Apostles, it is certain also, that God hath not so strictly tasked us to the labour of six days, as that he will not be better pleased if we now and then apply some of them to his honour, and make a fall towards Heaven: but then the observation of these Days is not to be made meerly a relaxation from servile work, nor much less a dispensation for looseness and profaneness, but God must be served on them with greater diligence than can be ordinarily expected on other days. And this is another branch of the pious Man's Duty in his Family.

3. There is nothing which I would mention in the Third place, amongst Family-Exercises, which I do not call a Necessary Duty; but would offer it to consideration, whether it be not advisable in some cases, for the promotion of Family-Piety, that in every Family, where it can be done, some Persons should be encouraged to take Notes of the Sermons which are preached in the Church, and repeat them  
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at home ; forasmuch as this course would not only afford a very seasonable and excellent entertainment for the Family in the intervals of Publick Worship on the Lord's-Day, but also be very advantageous both to Minister and People.

For the Minister, it would encourage him to study and to deliver weighty things, when he saw his words were not likely to perish in the hearing, and be lost in the air, but be reviewed and considered of ; by which means one Sermon would be as good as two, and might serve accordingly.

For the People, it would put the most ordinary sort of them upon considering, and endeavouring to remember and make something of that which is delivered to them, when they observe, that some of the ablest of the Congregation think it worth their pains to take so exact notice of it, as to write it down ; at least they would be ashamed to snore and yawn, when others are so intent and serious.

And as for the Family in which the repetition is made, they would have further occasion to observe, with what clearness and evidence the Doctrine was inferred from the Text, opportunity to weigh the Arguments used to enforce it, and be put upon making application of all to their own Consciences.

But

But I foresee several Objections (such as they are) will be made against this : It will be said, This course is unfashionable and puritanical ; That experience hath discovered, that writing after Sermons hath taught Men to be conceited and captious, and presently sets up Men for Lay-Preachers; and, in a word, That repeating Sermons, raised the Rebellion. But,

In Answer to the First of these, I observe, That it is neither unusual, nor under any ill character in Courts of Judicature, for Men to take Notes of the Reasonings, Determinations, and even the Opinions of the Judges : and, surely, Religion is of as much moment as the municipal Laws ; and Cases of Conscience are of as great consequence as *Meum* and *Tuum* : But if the Discourses of Preachers be not so considerate, their Reasonings not so close and weighty, nor their Determinations so well grounded, as to be worth noting, the more is the pity, to say no more. As for the Second Objection, I answer, That if the Preacher handle only the indisputable Doctrines of Christianity, and press them home and close upon the Consciences of Men, these will afford little scope for conceitedness or captiousness : but some Men that are of such a humour will be pragmatical

matical and profane, whether they write after Sermons or no; and therefore let us lay this blame where it is due. To the Third Objection, it is answered, That though writing after Sermons, might perhaps furnish Men with materials for Lay-preaching; yet it was impudence which disposed Men to it, and the dissolution of Government which gave opportunity for it: and if the Last of these three things be taken care of, the Second will be curbed, and the First harmless and innocent.

But Lastly, Whereas it is objected, That Writing and Repeating of Sermons was accessory to the late Rebellion; I answer, That it is evident, it could be neither the Writing nor the Repeating, but the seditious Matter of the Sermons that was in the fault; for it is certain, that good and pious Sermons are the most effectual way to prevent all mischief of that kind, tending to make good Subjects, as well as good Christians; and the Writing and Repeating of such Sermons, is a means to settle such Doctrine in the hearts of Men; and therefore I see not but that it would be good prudence to apply that to a good end, which hath been abused to a bad one, unless we will countenance the humour of some late Reformers, whose method was to  
abolish

abolish things for the abuse of them. Upon the whole matter, I see no just discouragement from this instance of Family-Devotion; however, I will say no more of it, but proceed to such as are unexceptionable.

4. It is certainly a Family Duty to instruct all the young and ignorant Persons in it, in the substantial Doctrines of Religion, and Rules of good Life. The obligation to, and the advantage of this office, have been sufficiently represented before, in the foregoing Chapter. Now therefore only to speak briefly and plainly of the manner of discharging it, it comprises these following Particulars :

First, That care be taken betimes to subdue the unruly wills and passions of Children; which is ordinarily not very hard to do, if it be minded time enough, whilst they are tender and pliable, but the defect herein (like an error in the first concoction) is hardly remediable afterwards : accordingly the Wise Man adviseth, *Prov. xix. 18. Chasten thy son whilst there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying* : By breaking his stomach now, we prevent the breaking of our own hearts hereafter ; for by this means, with the blessing of God upon it, we shall have  
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comfort in a Child ; and the State, and Publick Society, a governable Subject : whereas, contrariwise, stubbornness and malapartness in youth, grows to contemptuousness of Parents ; and to faction and sedition in the State, in age. In pursuance of this,

Secondly, Let them learn and be accustomed humbly to beg the blessing of their Parents and Progenitors : This (as meanly as some inconsiderable People think of it) is of mighty use ; for it not only teaches Children to reverence their Parents, but wonderfully provokes and inflames the affections of Parents towards them ; and besides this, it is the usual method of conveying the blessings of God upon them : for though it be only God that bestows the blessing, yet his way is to use the intervention and designation of Parents ; and generally, those whom they bless (in this case) are blessed, and those whom they curse are cursed.

Thirdly, Then let them learn to read, to pray, and especially to say their Catechism ; for though these things are not thoroughly understood by them now, yet they will stick by them, and be remembered, when they are more capable of improving them ; insomuch that it will  
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be uneasie to one that hath been well principled in his minority, to be impious and profane hereafter ; or if he should prove so, there will yet be some hopes of reclaiming him, because things will, some time or other, revive and awaken his Conscience.

Fourthly, After this, let them be brought to the Bishop, that he may lay his hands on them, pray over them, bless and confirm them. For if *the fervent prayer of every righteous man availeth much*, as St. James tells us, undoubtedly the solemn Prayer and Benediction of Christ's immediate Substitute, and the prime Officer of his Church, is not inconsiderable. Besides, when Men have understandingly and solemnly addicted themselves to the Christian Religion, and made it their own act by a voluntary and publick choice, it will ordinarily have a great influence upon them in modesty, honour and reputation, as well as Conscience, that they shall not easily go back from it, and renounce it: and though it is too true, that many have miscarried afterwards in point of practice ; yet it is very observable in experience, that few or none who have been Confirmed as aforesaid, have apostatized from the Profession of Christianity.

Fifthly.



Fifthly and lastly: After such foundations are laid, it is no time yet to be secure, but these beginnings must be followed with further instructions, that such Persons may be brought to a favourable sense of Piety, and understand the Reasons of the Religion which they have embraced, and so neither be debauched with Examples, nor tossed to and fro by every wind of new Doctrine: nay, further, these young Persons ought to be put upon all the ingenious learning they are capable of receiving, and we are able to afford them, for the improvement of their minds, that they may be the more serviceable to God, both in Church and State; by the intent prosecution of which, they will not only be kept out of the dangers which rash and unemployed youth is ready to run upon, but become an Ornament to themselves, and to their Relations; and which is more, be able to employ and enjoy themselves in elder years, without the usual diversions of drinking and gaming, which commonly are the silly resorts and refuges of those who wanted education in their youth.

5. There is a principal branch of Family-discipline yet remains to be taken notice of, and that is, the curbing and restraining,

ing, first of all, profaneness and contempt of things sacred, whether it be by cursing, swearing, blaspheming, or any other impudent scurrility ; and then, in the next place of all, intemperance, drunkenness, and bebauchery ; for such things as these do not only bring a stain and blemish, but a curse upon the Family, and, to be sure, the allowance of them is utterly inconsistent with any pretence to Piety.

And the care and concern for the suppressing these Vices, extends not only so far as to the restraining of it in all the constant and settled Members of the Family, but also to the discountenancing of it in those that are only occasionally as Guests in it. For how can any Man that loves God, endure to see him abused before his face, and not interpose for him, especially where he hath authority, namely, *within his own gates* ? Shall a Man pretend Piety, and make his Table become a Snare to his own Soul, and his House a Sanctuary and Privileged-place for Profaneness ? Nor let any Man think it becomes him in Gentility and Complaisance to take no notice of the one, or out of Hospitality to indulge the other ; for he that loves God as he ought to do, and hath

hath any measure of manly courage, will not be so sheepish, but that he will at least discountenance such indecencies within his jurisdiction.

But as for those that are settled Members of the Family, as Servants and Relations ; if any of them be guilty of such lewdness, I do not say, that they must be presently banished the Society ; for, it may be, Divine Providence sent them thither on purpose for their cure, and that we might have the glory of performing so worthy a work, and those Sinners the happiness of meeting with the means of reformation ; and therefore we must, when it happens so, look upon it as our duty to apply our selves in good earnest to recover them : but if, after all good means used, there appear no hopes of reformation, it is certainly a good Man's duty to dismiss such Persons, both to avoid the scandal and infection of them. And he that is truly conscientious of God's honour, and the spiritual interest of his Family, will not stick to sacrifice the petty interests of an useful Servant, or a beneficial Relation, thereupon.

## C H A P. V.

*Family Discipline : Or,*

*By what means the several Members of  
a Family may be brought to conform  
to the aforesaid Duties.*

**H**E that resolves to maintain Piety in his Family, must do it by such a method as this : First, Let him be sure to keep up the Authority which God hath given him, and not through carelessness, facility or sleepishness, level himself with those he is to govern, and suffer every body to do what is right in their own eyes ; for then, no wonder if Piety and all things else be out of order. He that abjects himself, shall be a meer cypher, and signifie nothing in his own House : but it is very much in a Man's own power, whether he will be despised or no ; for he that values himself upon the dignity of his Place, and asserts his own just Authority, shall find Divine Providence standing by him therein, and striking an awe upon the spirits of those that ought to be governed ; and so he will be able to do good service, not only in his Closet, but within the whole sphere of his Family.

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To this end, let him observe, that as in the Fourth Command, God requires and expects that every Master of a Family be responsible for all those that are *within his gates*; so accordingly, in the Fifth Commandment, he hath invested him with honour, under the title of *Father* and *Mother*, and both commanded and promised to reward obedience to him: and let not any one think that God will desert his own institution, so as to permit the Authority he hath here invested Parents with, to be either trampled upon by others, or prostituted by themselves, without severe animadversion.

Let him consider also the great interest that lies in the conserving of Paternal Authority, in which the foundation is laid, both of Civil and Ecclesiastical Government; forasmuch as accordingly as People are inured to order, and to be in subjection in private Families, such will be their behaviour afterwards in Church or State: for he that suffers his Children and Servants to be contumacious towards himself, trains them up for instruments of Schism and Rebellion; and he that, on the other side, countenances Faction and Disobedience to Publick Authority, makes a leading case for Rebellion and Confusion in his own Family:

Family: but he that accustoms those which belong to him, to obedience at home, makes his House a Seminary of good Subjects, and of good Christians, and will feel the comfort, and reap the blessing of both.

Above all, let him consider the nearness and naturalness of the Principles of Religion to the Minds of Men; insomuch, that that there are hardly any but are convinced of the necessity and obligation of it in their own Consciences: in other things, Inferiors may perhaps dispute the wisdom of their Governors, and so be tempted to disobey their Commands; but plain matters of Devotion admit of no dispute; they are imposed by divine Authority, written upon the hearts of Men, and enacted and proclaimed within their consciences; and therefore People may with the greater readiness be brought to the observance of them, if we do but stir up and awaken, or at most, second Conscience by our Authority. But then,

Secondly, This authority ought to be temper'd with sweetness and benignity in the exercise of it; for a Man is not to be a Tyrant, but a Father in his Family; he must not superciliously command, and imperiously will and require, but encline and persuade by the use of all motives and encourage-

couragements, and by all the arts of endearment oblige Men to their Duty.

A Man's Family is his own Body, and may be called himself, considered at large and in all his capacities; therefore unnecessary harshness and severity is as undecent in this society, as cruelty to his own flesh is unnatural. And it is commonly as unsuccessful as it is indecent; for Power without Goodness, is a Weapon without edge, which will go no farther than meer force carries it. When Men only fear, they will hate too, and will be sure to obey no more than needs must. Therefore the Apostle, *Eph. vi. 4.* advises, *Fathers, provoke not your children to wrath;* and *ver. 9.* forbids Masters to use *threatnings towards Servants;* but especially, *Col. iii. 19.* *all bitterness towards Wives* is prohibited: for these courses (in such near Relations) ordinarily make them worse instead of mending them, and stir up all the mud and dirt of their temper. Besides, it is to be considered, that the interest of making Men good, is very great and valuable; and he doth a very acceptable service to God, who obliges his Family to serve and honour him: for by so doing, a Man promotes the salvation of his own Soul; and he will have great allowances made for his  
personal

personal infirmities, at the Day of Judgment, who, in his more publick capacity, hath advanced God's glory, in the salvation of others. Therefore it is exceedingly worth the while, that we should deny our selves, and condescend to any honest art and method of engaging Men in Religion.

Especially this is to be considered, that the instances of Piety and Devotion, are, above all things, to be voluntary, free and chearful, or they are nothing worth ; and therefore harshness and severity are the most improper instruments for such an effect ; consequently it must be wise discourses, obliging carriage, sweetness of temper, kindness and benignity, that are the most likely methods of prevailing in such a case : and ordinarily to gain this point, no more is requisite, than that a Man discriminate between the good and the bad, that he favour the one, and discountenance the other ; and this alone will, in time, make a strange change in a Family. Especially,

Thirdly, If, in the third place, the Governor of a Family be a great Example of Piety himself ; Rules, without Examples, are neither understood nor considered by those to whom they are propounded : and he that goes about to over-rule his Family  
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to Piety, without making conscience of it in his own practice, nay, who doth not make his own life a great pattern of what he persuades to, undermines his own endeavours, and shall not only fail of success, but be ridiculous for his pains; for every body is aware of this, that if Devotion be necessary to one, it is so to another; if the Servant ought to pray to God, so ought the Master; if one ought to be zealous, certainly the other ought not to be careless or profane; or if one may be excused the trouble of Religion, so may the other also.

And, indeed, it is hardly possible for a Man, in these matters, to have the confidence earnestly to press the observation of that upon those under him, which is not conspicuous in his own practice; or at least, if he have the forehead to do it, and can so well act the part of the hypocritical Pharisee, as to *lay heavy burdens upon others, which he himself will not touch with one of his fingers*; yet as he cannot do it heartily, so he must be very vain, if he thinks Men will not be able to see through the disguise; and very sottish, if he can expect that such commands of his should carry any authority with them.

But there is a Majesty in holy Example; it not only commands, but charms Men  
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into compliance ; there is life and spirit in it, insomuch that it animates and inflames all about a Man ; it makes Piety to become visible, and not only shews it to be necessary, but represents it with all its advantages of goodness, beauty and ornament ; it confutes Mens mistakes of it, answers their objections against it, removes their suspicions, shames their cowardise and lukewarmness : in a word, it doth (after the manner of all great Engines) work powerfully, though almost insensibly.

We find, by common experience, that Men are sooner made wise, and fit for great actions, by the reading of History, than by studying of Politicks ; because matter of fact strikes us more powerfully, and the circumstances of things as they are done, instruct us more effectually than all dry rules and speculations can do : To which purpose it is to be remarked, that the way of the holy Scripture is rather to teach Men by Examples than by Rules ; and accordingly the whole Sacred Writ consists principally of the History of the Lives of Holy Men ; Almighty Wisdom thinking that way the fittest, not only to express the Laws of Vertue, but to make impression of them upon the spirits of Men ; and indeed (which is further remarkable) there

there are some of the more curious and excellent lines of Piety, which can hardly be express'd by words, but are easily legible in the lives of holy Men.

Therefore, let him who would engage his Family to Devotion, give them a fair Copy of it in his own Example, and then he shall not fail of the honour and comfort to see it transcribed and imitated by those about him.

4. But that he may with the more certainty and expedition attain this desirable effect, it is very necessary, that he neither make the lives of those he would gain upon, burdensom to them, and exhaust their spirits, by too great and constant drudgery about the affairs of the World, nor that he make the business of Religion irksom and unpleasant to them by unnecessary length and tediousness of Family-Devotion. For the former of these will take off their edge, and leave them with no heart to Religion; and the latter will beget an utter averfation to it.

As for the former, our Saviour hath told us, *we cannot serve God and Mammon*, and *that no man can serve two masters*; i. e. either one of them must be neglected, or both served very remissly: for it's certain, when Men are harrafs'd with secular busi-

ness, they cannot have spirits enough to attend Religion with any vigour.

And for the other, if the Duties of Religion be drawn out fantastically to a tedious length, it will be impossible (whilst Men are Men) that they should either be enclined to go to them with such chearfulness, or persevere in them with such delight and fervour as is requisite.

Therefore, let the World be so moderately pursued, as that time, and strength, and room may be left for Devotion; and let the Duties of Religion be so contrived, that they may be pleasant and easie, and then (besides that Devotions so performed are most acceptable to God) it will be no hard matter to bring our Families to comply with them. Especially,

5. If, in the Fifth place, the Governors of Families take care to order and methodize affairs so, that these different things intrench not upon each other; neither the World encroach upon Religion, nor Religion shut out and exclude the common affairs of life, but both may take their places in a just subordination;

We commonly observe, That things in an heap, and which are not digested into any order, look vast and numerous, so as to amuse our minds in the contemplation  
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of them, infomuch that we neither apprehend any of them distinctly, nor comprehend them all together; and in a crowd of business, we are either so confounded with the multiplicity, or distracted with the variety of things before us, that we apply our selves to nothing at all effectually; for one hinders and supplants the other. So it is here in the case between the affairs of the two Worlds, if both lie in gross before Men, and no distinct place be assign'd to each of them; the effect is, that both together being an intolerable burden, one of the two must necessarily be neglected, and that commonly falls to be the lot of Religion: and if it happen that these Offices are not totally omitted, they will be sure to be superficially performed; the minds of Men neither being sufficiently prepared for them, nor united enough to attend them without distraction and wandrings. Therefore, as the Wise Man tells us, *there is a time for every thing*: So let every Man, who would promote Religion in his Family, appoint set-hours for Prayer, and all the Offices of Devotion, and then it will neither be difficult to obtain the constant observance of them, nor so ordinary to perform them carelessly and formally.

6. Sixthly and lastly, It will be the wis-

dom of every Master of a Family, who would bring those which are under his care and tuition to an uniformity in Religion and the Worship of God, and to seriousness and heartiness therein, that he express all tender affection to them, and regard of them, when any of them happen to be sick or under any adversity, and by that means make to himself an opportunity of obliging them to take his counsel, and follow his direction in all other cases.

We use to say, He that will gain an interest in any Man, so that he may be useful to him, or compliant with him in his prosperity, must lay the foundation of his friendship in that Man's adversity. For no Man knows who are his Friends, till he hath occasion to make experiment of them; which cannot be done but in adversity: for every Man is a Friend to him that hath no need of him; but he that like the *good Samaritan*, deserts us not in our greatest difficulties, him we have just grounds to value and confide in. Now, above all Kindnesses, Men are most sensible of those which are done to their Bodies, and they commonly take the measures of all Friendship and Sincerity from thence; and therefore he that will win upon the minds of Men, must first oblige them in their bodily interests.

Besides,

Besides, as we observe, that all inferiour Creatures are most tractable and docible at such times as wherein they are lowest, and can least help themselves; so Mankind is most disposed to take advice, and most obedient to counsel, when he is at a non-plus in his affairs, and especially when the vanities of this World, which dazled his Eyes before, begin to vanish, and there seems to be but one way left with him, (that is, to prepare for another life) he will then freely admit of Discourse of the other World, and be glad to comply with all serious advice in order thereunto. These seasons of adversity therefore are by no means to be let slip by him who is tender of the Souls of those who are under his charge.

To which add, That forasmuch as it is the constant method of all the Zealots and Emisaries of false Religions, to insinuate themselves into sick and calamitous persons, to the end that by such an opportunity they may gain Disciples to their Party; and they too frequently find this subtilty successful: the consideration hereof ought to awaken the diligence, and encourage the hopes and endeavours of all those that sincerely desire to save their own Souls, and those that are imbarqued with them, to apprehend and

improve such opportunities to better purposes; especially seeing that in such seasons Men are as capable of good Principles as of bad, if there be not as much shameful and supine carelessness on the one side, as there is commonly vigilance and application on the other. And so much for Family-Piety.

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## C H A P. VI.

*Of Publick Piety, and particularly of governing a Man's self in relation to the Church and Publick Assembly of Christians.*

**A**S it is certain, we were not born for our selves; so neither is it a sufficient discharge of our Duty, that we be useful in our private Family, or amongst our Kindred and Relations only, but that we express a zeal of God's glory, and the good of Mankind, answerable to the full extent of our capacity; and let our light so shine out before men, that we may provoke, as many as are within our reach, to glorifie our Father which is in heaven.

Now,



Now, every private Man is in some measure concerned in the Neighbourhood and Parish wherein he dwells, and where-to he belongs; and therefore should so far at least dispense the influence of his zeal for God and Religion: for Almighty God, *who hath appointed the bounds of mens habitation*, having thus settled every Man in his station, expects that he should look upon this as his proper sphere, and adorn it as his peculiar province.

No private Man hath any just reason ordinarily to prompt him to go beyond this; forasmuch as if every good Man would do his part within these bounds, the whole World would be amended; and he that is remiss and negligent in this, cannot easily satisfy himself that he hath demonstrated such love to God, as becomes him, nor can he expect to reap all those comforts and benefits which otherwise, by a conscientious discharge of himself in this particular, might redound to him.

Now that which we mean by the relation to a Neighbourhood or a Parish, hath a double consideration. First, As every Parish is or ought to be a Branch or Member of the Church. Secondly, As it is a Branch or Member of the Commonwealth. Accordingly, there is a double obligation

lies upon every Man that is within the bounds of it ; and from thence arise Duties of a different nature ; for brevity and perspicuity, I will distinguish them by the names of Ecclesiastical and Civil Piety, and then shew what each of them comprehends, beginning with that which I call Ecclesiastical Piety, or the discharge of such Publick Duties as especially concern the Society of a Church. And this consists in these few following particulars.

1. That a Man join himself to, and carry himself as a Member of the Church, and not out of pride, fantasy or contempt, separate himself from it, or schismatically set up Factions and Conventicles against it. It is evident, that our Lord Jesus Christ established the Society of a Church, that is, appointed that all those who would be his Disciples, should not content themselves singly and particularly to believe on him, but should all be obliged to associate themselves, and make up a Body or spiritual Corporation, wherein they were to hold Communion with each other, as Members, as well as with him their Head. The ends and uses of this institution were very many and great ; for besides that by this means Order and Unity is promoted, which is very beautiful in the Eyes of God himself, our  
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Lord hereby provided that the Truth of Christianity might be jointly held up in the World, and the several Members of this Society become mutually more helpful and comfortable to each other; and also, that by a constant method of Christian intercourse here, they may be fitted for Eternal Friendship and Society in Heaven. In subserviency to all these ends, Publick Officers were appointed in the Church, to govern and to instruct the several Members of it, which it were plainly impossible for them to do (unless their numbers were almost infinite and equal to that of the People) if it had not been that the People were to join together, and become a common Flock for those Officers to govern and instruct.

Moreover, it was also the intention of our Saviour, that this Church of his should be but one, and Catholick, embracing all the true Believers all the World over; and therefore it is called his Body, and his Spouse: from whence it follows, that every Man who will partake of the Benefits which flow from him, must be a part of this Body, and thereby hold Communion with him, by conjunction with that, which is otherwise impossible to be done, than by joining with that part of the Catholick Church where it hath pleased the Divine  
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Providence to settle our abode and habitation, that is, in the Parish and Neighbourhood where we dwell ; for without this, though it's possible we may retain the same Faith in our hearts with the Catholick Church, yet we cannot perform the offices of Members, nor serve the ends of such a Society. The result is therefore, that it is ordinarily every Christian's Duty to communicate in all the Offices of Christianity, to submit to the Officers, to be subject to the Censures, and to comply with the Orders of that part of the Church amongst which the Divine Providence hath placed him.

I say, *ordinarily* ; because it may happen that the Society of Christians amongst whom a Man lives, may be heretical in their Doctrine, or Idolatrous in their Worship, and then it will not be his sin, but his duty, to separate from them ; but bating that case, and where the Doctrine is sound, and the Worship free from Idolatry, I see not what else can acquit him of Schism, that separates, or what can be sufficient to dissolve the obligation of joining with the Catholick Church by conjunction with that particular Society, or Member of it, where he is placed.

Therefore, let not the good Christian,  
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without flat necessity, suffer himself to be alienated from the particular Church, lest by so doing he lose the comforts and benefits of the Catholick Church; but let it be his care and endeavour (so far as it is in his power) that there may be but one Church in the World, as was the intention of our Saviour: To this purpose, let him not hearken to the fond pretences of purer Ordinances, and double-refined Worship, or to the vain boasts of greater edification in other Assemblies; for besides, that a Man may justly expect most of God's blessing upon those means which are most his duty to apply himself unto, it is also evident, that if such suggestions be attended to, it will be flatly impossible that there should ever be such a thing as Unity or Order in the Christian Church; nay, these conceits will not only distract and confound the Order of the Church, but they serve to fill Mens heads with endless disputes, and their hearts with perpetual scruples about purity of administrations; so that they shall rest no where, but under pretence of soaring higher and higher, shall ramble from one Church to another, till at last they cast off all Ordinances as the highest attainment of Spirituality.

Nor

Nor let him give ear to any peevish insinuations against the Church and Publick Worship, upon account that there are some Rites or Ceremonies made use of, which are only of humane institution; for it is not only reasonable to hope that God will be well-pleased with Humility, Peaceableness, and Obedience to Humane Laws, but certain, that there is no Church in the World that is or can be without some Observances that have no higher original than Humane institution. But against these, and all other such like Principles of Separation, let him endeavour to secure himself:

1. First, By dismissing the prejudices of Education, and the unnecessary Scrupulosities of a melancholy Temper, and, above all, acquit himself of Pride and Pragmaticalness, and then he will easily and comfortably comply with any sound part of the Christian Church. In pursuance whereof,

2. He must diligently frequent all the Publick Offices of Religion in that Society, whether it be Prayers, Preaching or Reading the Word of God, or Administration of the Sacraments, &c. For it is a mighty shame that a Man should pretend to be of the Church, who cares not how little or how

how seldom he comes at it, and who slight the advantages of its Communion. For such a Man, however he may hector and swagger for the Notion of a Church, manifestly betrays that all is but Humour or Interest, and no true principle of Christianity at the bottom; and really, he doth more dishonour to that Society, than the professed Schismatick doth or can do. For besides that he encourages them in their contempt of it, and discourages good Men in their zeal for it; he foment the suspicion of Atheistical Men, that Religion is but a politick trick to catch silly Persons with, whilst those that are privy to the plot, keep out of the bondage of it: I need not add, That he defeats the Institution of our Saviour, that he baulks his own Conscience (if he have any,) and aggravates his own Damnation, which are all very sad things.

On the other side, the blessings and comforts of frequenting the Offices of the Church, are so many and great, that it is not imaginable how any Man who is convinced of the duty of Communion in general, should be able to neglect the particular instances of it. For besides that the Church is God's House, where he is especially present, and where we meet him, and place  
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our selves under his eye and observation, and from whence he usually dispenses his favours; it is a great furtherance of our zeal and piety, to be in the presence of one another, where the example of holy fervour and devotion in one, powerfully strikes and affects others. There is also an extraordinary Majesty in the Word of God, when it is not only fitted to our peculiar condition, but authoritatively pronounced, and applied to our Conscience by God's Messenger. Above all, in Prayers, when our Petitions and Requests are not only put up to Almighty God, by his own Minister appointed for this purpose; but our weakness is relieved, our spirits encouraged, and we are enabled (notwithstanding our private meanness or guilt) to hope for acceptance and success in our desires, by the concurrent devotions of so many holy Men as there join with us in the same suit, and in the same words, and whose united importunity besieges Heaven, and prevails with Almighty Goodness for a blessing. Wherefore, let no Man permit the private exercises of Piety it self, such as Prayer, Reading, or Meditation, to supersede or hinder his attendance upon the Publick Offices of the Church, seeing that as these yield more  
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publick honour to the Divine Majesty, so they are more effectual for our own benefit ; much less let sloth, or too great eagerness upon the affairs of the world, make us forget or neglect them ; but least of all, let any lukewarm Indifferency, or atheistical Carelessness, seize upon any Man in this particular ; but let the Man who glories to be of the Christian Church, be sure to be found there in the Assemblies of God's Servants.

3. And more particularly, let him not neglect the opportunities of Receiving the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, as often as they are presented to him, unless some weighty occasion hinder or disable him. It is well known to have been the use of the Primitive Church, to administer this holy Sacrament as often as it held any solemn Assembly for Divine Worship, and the Christians then as duly received it as they came to Church ; nor did the frequency of it abate their reverence to it, but highly encreased it rather. And this Office they therefore called the *Communion*, because it was the symbol of a compleat Member of the Church, and the fullest instance of that Society. To have been kept from it by any accident, was then looked upon as a great calamity ; but to be debarred

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red from it by the Censure of the Church, was as dreadful to them as the Sentence of Death. They sought to be restored to it with tears, with prostrations in Sackcloth and Ashes, with all the intercession of their Friends, and all the interests they could make.

There was no need, in those times, to use Arguments to convince Men of the Duty, or repeated Exhortations to press them to the performance of it; the Ministers of the Church had no trouble in answering Objections against it, or removing impertinent Scruples about it, much less was there any occasion to urge the observance of it by humane Laws; for they remembered it was instituted by their Saviour, *on the same night in which he was betrayed*, for the commemoration of his Passion, and recommended to their observance by the most obliging circumstances; they found the constant solemnity of it settled in all Churches by the Apostles, and they were well aware of the unspeakable comforts of it.

Now the reason of all these things holds as much in these times as then, (saving that Men are not so conscientious and devout as they were: ) For, in the first place, it hath been the custom of the Church, in all

all times since, to make this Sacrament the badge and cognizance of her Members, until of late those have pretended to be Churches, where there was neither Order nor Unity, neither Sacraments administered, nor indeed Persons qualified to administer them; and it's great pity and shame that such an unhappy Novelty should prescribe against all Antiquity. And then, secondly, as for the institution of this Sacrament by our Saviour, it is manifest, that he did not deliver himself by way of counsel and advice, so as to leave it to our discretion or courtesie to observe this Sacrament or omit it, but by expresse and positive command, *Do this in remembrance of me*; and therefore there is no room for the cavil against mix'd Communion, as if we were excused from celebrating the Lord's Supper, because others do it unworthily; which is as much as to say, because some do it as they should not, I may chuse whether I will do it at all. But (as I said) here is an expresse Command that *we do it*, and therefore we have no liberty to omit it upon any such pretence. And upon the same account, it will be in vain to pretend I am not prepared for it, and therefore must be excused; for when our Lord hath made it our duty to do it, it is  
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our duty also to do it as we should do ; and the neglect of one duty will not excuse another, *i. e.* our sin of unpreparedness will be no apology for our sin in total omission of the Sacrament. The whole truth is, here are two things required of us, one expressed, and the other implied ; the express duty, is, that we celebrate the memorial of our Saviour's Passion ; the implied duty, is, that this be done with such preparation as agrees with so sacred a Mystery ; both these therefore are to be performed : for, as my coming to the Sacrament will not excuse my coming unpreparedly, so much less will my unpreparedness excuse my not coming at all. But of the two, it seems far the more pardonable to come, though somewhat unpreparedly, than not to come because of unpreparedness ; for that is neither to come, nor prepare neither. I say, though neither ought to be done, yet it is plainly better to offend in the point of an implied duty, than of an express one ; but especially, it is more tolerable to commit one sin than both, as he that comes not to the Lord's Supper at all, notoriously doth.

But then, thirdly, for the comforts of this holy Sacrament, those are so vastly great, that the Man is as well insensible of  
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his own good, as of the honour of Christ Jesus, who willfully neglects the Lord's Supper. For, in the first place, by commemorating the Passion of our Lord in that holy Feast, we not only perform an office of obedience and gratitude to our Saviour, but we strengthen our Faith in the efficacy of his Death and Sacrifice for the expiation of sin, which affords the greatest relief to our guilty consciences that can be. And together herewith we melt our own hearts into contrition, fears and sorrow for those sins of ours which required such an atonement. For who can consider what his Saviour suffered, and *look upon him whom we have pierced*, and not mourn heartily for his sin and his danger? Again, by Eating and Drinking at the Lord's Table, we are made sensible of the happy estate of Friendship with God, which we are now restored to by the intercession of our Lord Jesus. Moreover, by commemorating his Death, and the ends and effects of it, we fortifie our own minds against the fears of Death; and by feeding upon his Body and Blood, we have the pledges of our own Resurrection and Immortality; and to say no more (though in so copious and comfortable a subject) by partaking of his Body and Blood, we be-

become united to him, and partake of the same spirit that was in him.

And now, after all this, who will make that an excuse for omitting the Sacrament, that they do not find or observe that either themselves or others profit by it? What, is it no profit, that we have done our duty, and express'd our gratitude to so great a Benefactor? Is it no profit to see Christ Crucified before our eyes, and to see him pour out his Heart Blood for Sinners? Is it no profit to be made ingenuously to weep over our own sins? Is it no privilege, no comfort to be admitted to the Lord's Table, in token of friendship and reconciliation with him? Certainly, there is no body but profits something, more or less, by these things; and if there be any Man who doth not profit greatly by them, he must needs have a very naughty heart indeed, and had need to prepare himself, and go often to the Sacrament, that it may be mended. But however, let the good Christian gladly embrace all opportunities of this holy Solemnity, and not doubt to find comfort by it.

4. As for the other offices of the Church, such as Prayers especially, let him remember to frequent them constantly and entirely. By *constancy* of attendance upon  
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Publick Worship, I mean, that he should not only apply himself to it on the Sundays or Lord's Days, but every Day of the Week, if there be opportunity : and by *entireness* of God's Service, I understand it to be his duty both to go at the beginning, and to join in it both Morning and Evening, that by all together, he may not only secure himself and his own conscience of his heartiness and sincerity, but demonstrate to all about him the great sense he hath of the moment of Religion, and that he looks upon the serving of God as of greater consequence than all other interests whatsoever.

As for the first of these, *viz.* the frequenting the Publick Prayers every Day (where they are to be had) it is observable in the character of *Cornelius*, *Act. x. 2.* that amongst other instances of Devotion, it is said of him, that *he prayed to God always* ; which cannot well be understood of any thing else but his daily frequenting the Publick Prayers, because his private Prayers could not be so well known as to make his character. But most expressly it is said of all that believed, *Act. ii. 46.* that *they continued daily with one accord in the temple* ; which must needs principally have reference to this duty of Publick Prayer :  
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and it is very hard if any Man be so put to it, that he cannot spare one Hour in a Day to do publick honour to the Divine Majesty ; or rather, it is a great sign of unbelief in his Providence, as well as want of love to him, if a Man cannot trust God so far as to hope that such a time spent in his service shall be recompensed by his blessing upon the residue of the Day ; or however, a good Christian will be well contented, and gladly sacrifice so much of his secular interests (as this comes to) to the Divine Majesty.

As for the second point, *viz.* going at the beginning of Prayers, it is a shameful neglect which several Persons are guilty of, who will not altogether be absent from the Church; but yet will come commonly so late, that they not only lose part of the Prayers, but enter very abruptly and irreverently upon that which they partake of. It is possible a Man may sometimes be surprized by the time, or diverted from his intention by some emergency ; but to be frequently tardy, is an argument that he loves something better than God and his Worship. For doubtless, a good Christian would ordinarily chuse rather to stay for the Minister, than that the Publick Office should stay for him ; and thinks it fitter



fitter to spend a little time in preparing and disposing his heart for the Duties of Religion, than either to enter into the Divine Presence rudely, or to serve him only by halves.

And as for the third branch of this instance of Devotion, *viz.* the resorting both to Morning and Evening Service, it is observable, *Act. iii. 1.* that the Apostles *were at the temple at the hour of Prayer, being the ninth hour :* which is both a proof of their frequenting the Evening Service, as well as that of the Morning ; and also an example of observing the just and stated times of Publick Worship. And surely it will become every good Christian to be led by such a Precedent, especially seeing the Gospel-Worship which we resort to is so much more excellent and comfortable than the Jewish was (which those holy Men thus carefully frequented) as we shall see by and by.

5. In the next place, it is to be minded, That in all these publick approaches to God's House, we are to express a great reverence towards the Divine Majesty : By which I do not only mean, that we ought in our hearts to think worthily of him, and prostrate all the inward powers of our souls to him, but that in our out-

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ward man, in our carriage and bodily deportment, we express an awful regard to Him, by all such gestures and signs, as, according to the common opinion of Men, are taken to betoken the highest reverence and observance, such as standing, kneeling, bowing, and prostrations of our selves before Him.

For though the Heart be that which God principally looks at, yet forasmuch as he made our Bodies as well as our Souls, and we hope he will save both, he therefore expects *we should glorifie him, both with our souls and with our bodies, which are his, and which he hath bought with a price*, 1 Cor.vi.20. And indeed, there is such a nearness and sympathy between our Bodies and Spirits, that they ordinarily move by consent, and draw one another into compliance: inso-much, that he who truly bows his Soul to God, can scarcely forbear at the same time to bow his Knees to him also; and he, on the other side, that bows his Knee to him, is, by that very motion of his body, in some measure put in mind to entertain reverential Thoughts and Affections towards him.

And this care of Bodily Worship is the more important in publick service, and especially in God's House; because (as I  
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noted before) then and there his honour and grandeur is concerned, and any indecent carriage, in such a case, is an affront to him, and exposes him to contempt in the eyes of men; and therefore that carriage which in secret worship might admit of excuse, will in publick be intolerable profaneness.

Wherefore, let not the pious Man be affrighted by any one, out of the expressions of bodily reverence, under the notion of Superstition, which is become a Bugbear, by which weak Men are made afraid of every instance of a decorous or generous Devotion. There can be no culpable Superstition in our Worship, so long as we have the true Object for it, and whilst we use not such expressions of our Devotion as he hath forbidden; but this of Bodily Reverence is so far from being forbidden, that it is expressly required in the holy Scripture, and hath been constantly practised by all holy Men.

Nor let the fancy of a Spiritual Worship, required under the Gospel, beguile any Man into a contempt or neglect of Bodily Reverence; for it is plain, that although the Christian Religion raises Mens Inward Devotion higher, yet it abates nothing of Outward Adoration; but rather, when it

requires the former should be more intense and affectionate, it supposes the other should be answerable, because it is natural so to be; for this being the accessory, cannot but follow the principal.

It is true, there is a possibility that more stress may be laid upon the Shadow than the Substance; and some Men may hope to complement God Almighty out of his right to their Hearts, by the addresses of their Bodies: But the fault, in this case, is not that there is too much of the latter, but too little of the former; and the good Christian therefore will be sure to join both together, and as he will come to God's House with the most elevated affections, so he will express his apprehensions of the infinite distance between him and the Divine Majesty, by the lowliest postures of his body.

6. Next to this, let the pious Man think it his duty to pay some measure of reverence to God's Minister, as well as to the Divine Majesty, and for his sake. In the Old Testament, God took special care of the Respect and Dignity of his Ministers, as well as of their Maintenance; for indeed, all contumely towards them rebounds upon himself: And the New Testament is very full and express in this particular;

ticular ; they are those that *watch for our souls, and must give account for them ;* they are God's *Embassadors, and workers together with him ;* those by whose hands he pardons and *blesse*s his People, and therefore he holds them *as the stars in his right hand ;* and those who slight them that speak in his Name on Earth, *affront Him that speaketh from Heaven.* But amongst the many passages in the New Testament to this purpose, that of the Apostle to the *Thessalonians*, 1 Epist. v. 13. is very considerable ; the words are these, *We beseech you, brethren, to know those who labour amongst you, and are over you in the Lord ; and to esteem them very highly in love, for their works sake.* The last words are so emphatical, they cannot be expressed in English, *ὡς ἵνα αὐτοὺς ὑμεῖς ἐν κυρίῳ, τοῦτο ἵνα αὐτοὺς ἐν ἀγάπῃ ὑψηλὰ ἡγάγετε διὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν,* to give them greater esteem than otherwise is due to them for their work and office sake, *i. e.* to value them above their parts, and merits, and quality, in other respects ; for the sake of that relation they stand in to God, and for their office and usefulness towards our Souls.

And indeed, touching that last particular, it is evident in experience, that all those who have any regard to their own Souls, are such as endeavour to raise in their Hearts an esteem for their Minister ;

not only that they may encourage his studies, and sweeten his labours to him, but that they may render themselves the more capable of following his counsels, and receiving benefit by his instructions : And, on the other side, those that slight and vilifie the Persons of such, neither do nor possibly can (ordinarily) receive any benefit by their Ministry ; and therefore the Prophet *Hosea*, chap. iv. 4. speaking of a profligate and hopeless sort of People, useth this expression, *This people are as those that strive with the priest* ; q. d. they are not only horribly vicious and profane, but they are incorrigible too. Therefore the piously disposed Man will be sure to reverence God's Ministers, both for God's sake, and his own too. And this leads me to another Duty of kin to the former, viz.

7. That the good Christian account it an office of publick Piety, as well as of common Justice, to pay truly and faithfully his Tythes and Church Dues to the Minister : this the Apostle intimates by the expression of *double honour*, 1 Tim. v. 17. Natural Reason, and the common Sense of Mankind, requires, that they which *serve at the Altar*, should *live upon the Altar*. And in the Old Testament, when God himself settled the provision for his Ministers, he did

did it most amply and honourably ; and under the Gospel, pious Antiquity took care that the Christian Church, and Ministry thereof, should be liberally endowed, till the envy and rapacity of after-times deprived it of a great part of its rights : but now, after those depredations, it would be an horrible sin and shame to rob the Church of any part of that remainder, or fraudulently to diminish or impair it. For it is evident, that no Man can pretend any right to it, as having neither purchased it nor hired it, nor had it descend upon him by inheritance ; the Church's due being a reserved Estate, or a Rent-charge upon every private Estate. And it is notorious, that it is what pious Ancestry consecrated to this use ; and therefore no part of it can be invaded, intercepted or encroached upon, without Sacrilege, and the Curse of God.

And for proof of this, we need no more than to observe the common success of such Men as purloin from the Church and (as their own phrase is) are always pinching on the Parson's side. They are generally a querulous, uneasie, lean, hungry and unthrifty sort of People, God Almighty blowing upon and blasting their other labours, for the sake of this accursed thing

in their Tents ; or if any of them thrive for the present, yet, one time or other, a Coal from the Altar will take hold of, and fire their Nests. Whereas, on the other side, those that are just to God in this particular, ordinarily find the benefit of it in the success of their affairs ; and they are commonly chearful in their spirits, and prosperous in the world.

But the good Christian will not need these Arguments ; for he loves God, and his Service, and his Ministers ; and thinks it fit, that he that *reaps spiritual things, ought liberally to sow temporal things* ; at least, he will rather abridge himself, than wrong the Church, although it may be never so cleverly done, under the countenance of a corrupt custom or prescription. So far from it, that,

8. In the Eighth place, He will be an Example of pious munificence, and put himself to some voluntary cost for the Ornaments of Religion, and the House of God, and that his Publick Service may be performed with gravity, decency and solemnity. For he thinks it very fit, that the Great Majesty of Heaven and Earth should not only be worshipped with sincerity and devotion, but with grandeur and magnificence. He will not therefore humour the  
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profaneness of degenerate times so much, as to *for swear building of Churches*, if it be in his power, nor much less will be backward or stingy in-repairing of them, when there is occasion; for he cannot find in his heart to let God's House lie waste, when he builds his own; nor frame his mind to think that is good enough for the uses of Religion, which he could not be contented with for his private accommodation, if better were in his power; and therefore will, in all Parish-meetings about these matters, vote for God, against his own Purse; for he is of *David's* mind, who had no fanſie for a cheap Religion, *nor would serve God with that which cost him nothing*, 1 Chron. xxi. 24. And as he, *Psal.* lxxxiv. ver. 5, 6, 7. blesses those that took pains to repair the Ways, and to make the Passage easie towards God's House at *Jerusalem*; so the pious Christian will endeavour, by his counsel and example, that the whole external face of Religion may be lightsome, beautiful and decorous in the place where he dwells, to the end that not only his Animal Spirits may the more chearfully comply with the Devotion of his Mind, but that those also may be invited to frequent God's House and Worship, who have not yet experimented

the Spiritual Ravishments of it. In further pursuance whereof,

9. The pious Man (we speak of) will, together with all the foresaid Allurements, use also his utmost endeavours, by persuasions, encouragements, and all other fit means to prevail with the whole Neighbourhood or Parish to frequent the Church. For as he would not go to Heaven alone, nay, knows assuredly, he shall not come there, if he do not endeavour to carry others along with him; so neither is he contented to feed upon the fatness of God's House alone, but would have others partake with him.

He hath a holy indignation, to observe Theatres to be filled, Exchanges and Markets thronged, and God's House unfurnish'd with Guests. He wonders at the inconsiderateness of Men, who incurr such a guilt, by the contempt of Religion; and pities their folly, that deny themselves so many comforts and advantages as God's House affords, above any other place of resort whatsoever.

Besides, he considers, that not only God is more honour'd by a general confluence to his service, but that his own heart is more enlarged and chearful, and his affections more raised (as it were moving in  
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Confort) when there is a brave concourse in Divine Offices.

*Psal. cxxii. 1, 2. I rejoiced (saith the Holy Man) when they said, Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord: Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.* Well-disposed Persons (it seems) then were wont to call upon and provoke one another, and to flock together in Companies towards the Temple, and it was a pleasant spectacle to the Psalmist to behold it. And let good Christians be ashamed to be outdone in any thing of this kind, since our Church and Worship is so incomparably more excellent than theirs. What was it that a zealous Jew could provoke his Neighbours to go up to the Temple for? to see a Beast slain, and a Smoke made with the Fat and Intrails, or to muse upon the obscure Hieroglyphicks in the Fabrick, the Utensils, the Ornaments and Service of that House? But a Christian goes to the Church to hear the lively Oracles of God, to see Heaven opened in all its glories, and to be shewed the way thither.

Therefore, he that is sensible of the great odds on the side of the Christian Worship, and who hath so much Prudence and Charity as to render him serviceable amongst his Neighbours to such a purpose, will

will jog and awaken them out of their sloth and negligence of going to the Church, by wife and manly Discourses, and friendly and familiar Exhortations, from the considerations of the scandal to Religion, and discouragement to the Minister by the Peoples remifsness, and of the duty and benefit of diligent attendance ; and he will with the same zeal and care endeavour to answer their Objections, and remove their Scruples about it ; and especially considering that this is commonly better taken, and sinks deeper into such Men as need it, when it is done (not only by the Minister, who is presumed, by these incogitant Persons, to do it for his Interest, or the Reputation of his Person or Profession, but) by those who are upon the same terms with themselves.

To all this, the pious Man aforesaid will wisely improve the interest of his charity to oblige the poorer sort to their duty, dispensing most liberally to them who are most enclinable to follow his counsel in this particular ; and for the middle sort of Men, he will trade, and buy and sell upon choice with those that are best affected to the Church and Religion. But if all this should not do, and that he cannot prevail upon all ; yet,

10. In the last place, He will not fail, at least, to over-rule his own Family, that they shall universally and constantly frequent the Church, and so be an example to the Neighbourhood. This, I have shewed before, every Governor of a Family hath authority from God to do, and the holy Scripture affords us several instances of the efficacy and success of making use of it to this purpose : amongst the rest, by virtue hereof, *Joshua* undertook for his House, that *they should serve the Lord* ; and *Cornelius* prevailed upon those under him so, that he is said *to fear the Lord, with all his House*.

And indeed, a Master of a Family will be able to give a very sorry account of his Family, if he cannot oblige them to go to Church with him ; for we find by woful experience, that where, under pretence of scruples about the Publick Worship, Inferiours have claimed the privilege of exemption, and been permitted to resort to Conventicles, the effect hath been, that such Persons have not only grown captious and insolent, and by degrees to despise their Superiours, but having by this means gotten from under the eye of their Governors, have made no scruple to run into Debauchery.

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Therefore, let the pious Man strictly charge himself thus far, and look upon himself as very insignificant in his place, if he do not so much publick honour to God and Religion, as to bring his Family to the House of God.

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## C H A P. VII.

*Of Civil Piety : Or,*

*How a good Man may carry himself so, as to promote God's Honour, and the Publick Good, together with his own Peace and Comfort, in the Parish, considered only as a Civil Society or Neighbourhood.*

**W**HEN our blessed Saviour, *Mat. v. 13.* saith to his Disciples, *Ye are the salt of the earth*, he did not direct himself only to his Apostles, or to them and their Successors, the Pastors of his Church, (as some have imagined,) but to all his Disciples in general. For besides that the Beatitudes which he pronounces in the former part of the Chapter, and his other Discourse (pursuant of them) which immediately

mediately precedes these words, apparently concern all Christians, so far as they are qualified for them ; It is evident also by *St. Luke, chap. xiv.* comparing the 25<sup>th</sup> ver. with the 32<sup>d</sup>, that it was his intention to apply this title, of being *the salt of the earth*, to the whole Body of true Christians.

And then the importance of that expression will be this, That the true spirit of Christianity is and ought to be a principle of activity ; and the Professors of this Religion are not to content themselves with passive innocency, and that they escape the contagion of evil Example, nor be corrupted and debauched by the temptations or customs of the world : But that they must look upon it as their Duty to better and improve the state of Mankind, to influence upon it, to season and preserve others from corruption, as well as themselves.

Nor is this activity of true Christianity to be strictly confined within the limits of the Church, or to display it self meerly in the great Duties of Religion properly considered. For as our Saviour designed not only to shew Men a Way to another World above, but also to amend the condition of this present World below, and to make it a more quiet and comfortable Habitation ;  
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so, doubtless, when he calls his Disciples the Salt of the whole Earth, he intended to require, that every good Man should within his whole sphere) endeavour to promote Humanity, Morality, and the Civil and Political Happiness of Mankind. The discharge of which, is that which I call *Civil Piety*; and the measures whereof (at least so far as concerns the purpose in hand) are briefly described in the following particulars.

1. The first office of Civil Piety, is, to maintain Government and Order, to keep up the Honour and Dignity of the Prince, preserve the Reverence of Magistracy, and the Laws of a Man's Country. For the doing of this, we have as express and urgent Commands of God, as any are to be found in the whole Scripture; and therefore the conscientious discharge hereof is as acceptable to him, as any act of immediate Worship. For God Almighty needs nothing at our hands for himself, or for his own use and advantage, but makes the publick Good of his Creatures the Matter and Reason of his Laws. Now Publick Peace and Tranquillity (which are only to be preserved by Laws and Magistracy) are of mighty concernment to Mankind, as well as beautiful in the Eyes of Him that calleth



calleth himself *a God of Order*. For without Government, we could have no quiet in our Habitations, no security of our Persons, no propriety in our Estates, no defence against foreign Invasion, nor any refuge from the enraged Multitude, or combined force of evil Men; but the Weak would be a prey to the Strong, the Slothful would eat the labours of the Industrious, the World would be filled with Murders, Rapine and Violence, and become an Hell upon Earth; and therefore it is not only worthy of a wise Man's care to uphold Government, but must be his important duty to endeavour it.

And the being instrumental herein, is not only very honourable to Religion, and consequently procures the benign aspect of Princes towards it, and provokes them to become Nursing Fathers of it, but is peculiarly commodious to all the offices and exercises thereof. Therefore it is observable, that the Apostles generally in all their Writings, immediately after they have discoursed of the peculiar Duties of Christianity, subjoin earnest Exhortations to obedience to Humane Laws, and Civil Powers; and the Primitive Christians were so infinitely tender herein, as if they thought that God could not have his Honour, and  
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Glory, and Service rightly performed to him, unless Peace and Order were preserved in the World.

Now forasmuch as the greatest Kingdoms consist of so many several lesser Bodies, as the integral parts thereof; and those again of so many Parishes: And forasmuch as it is impossible there should be Peace and good Order in the Whole, if the particular parts or members be out of order; therefore it must not only be the duty, but be within the power of every private Person to contribute something towards the great end aforesaid; first, by disposing himself; secondly, by principling his Family; and thirdly, by persuading and enclining his Neighbours to favour and assist the Government towards the attainment of the design of Humane Society. And this the good Christian ought at this time especially to set himself about with the greater zeal; because the looseness herein seems to be one of the peculiar evils of the present age we live in, and that which not only makes an ill reflection upon Religion, but endangers the state of it.

In order therefore to the upholding of Government, let the good Man endeavour, in converse with his Neighbours, to possess them with an apprehension of the necessity  
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of submitting private interests to common utility, and particular opinion to publick discretion, and so bring them into a good opinion of the reasonableness of the Laws, and of the wisdom of their Governors. Let him labour to remove Peoples discontents, to confute their jealousies, and to make them chearful and well-pleased with the state of the World, which God hath ordered. Let him discountenance all seditious Libels and News; not permit in his company any pragmatik censuring of the Laws or publick Councils; no traducing the Persons or exposing the Infirmities of Governors, nor no repining at, and envying the glory and splendour of those that are preferred above themselves.

That he may be successful in all this, let him be careful to preserve and keep up the distinct ranks, orders and degrees of Men, and that those differences which it hath pleased the Divine Providence to make in the fortunes and conditions of Men be observed, I mean, in respect of Age and Youth, Riches and Poverty, Honour and Obscurity; the neglect of which, is not only a malapert Quakerly humour, but a principle of sedition and confusion in the World. For as it is evident, that there can be no Peace and Quiet in the World,  
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if there be no Government ; so it is as certain, there can be no Government, where there is no Order, nor the different degrees amongst Men observed : And therefore, he that would either level the condition of all Men, or ( which is the same thing in effect ) would destroy that reverence which keeps up that distinction and diversity of condition, dissolves the very sinews of Humane Society.

God Almighty, indeed, could easily have levelled the condition of all Men, and taken away or prevented the differences of Rich and Poor, Honourable and Ignoble ; and of Old and Young too, if he had so pleased. But then, it is not imaginable how there could have been any Society amongst Men, at least, unless he had also, by his Omnipotency, made them all to be wise and good too : but forasmuch as he resolved to have Order and Government amongst Men, and yet would not effect it by violence ; he therefore resolved, by means of those different conditions aforesaid, to subordinate them one to another, and to unite them together in the bonds of mutual usefulness and dependance.

So he ordered, that some should be poor, to ease the rich of labour and drudgery ; and others rich, to employ and encourage  
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their industry ; that the one might have superfluity to relieve the other's want, and the other be obliged by their bounty : the same Providence ordered, that there should be some Men in power and dignity, and others in privacy and obscurity ; that the Man of Honour standing by and countenancing the Ignoble as his Client, he, on the other side, should observe and acknowledge him as his Patron, and so harmony arises out of this discord.

Again, He ordered the World so, that all should not be of a stature and capacity of body or mind, but that there should be Old Men able to counsel and advise others, but not of strength to execute ; and Young Men of spirit and vigour for execution, but destitute of counsel and wisdom ; that the former, by their experience and observation, instructing the latter, and the latter, by their strength and courage, assisting the former, they might be mutually endeared to each other, as Members of the same Body.

He therefore who encourages or suffers (if he can help it) the Poor to be surly and insolent towards the Rich, or the private Person to be contumacious towards those in dignity, or the Young to be rude and malapert towards the Aged, opposes

poses himself to Divine Providence, and is the Author of dissolution of Government, and confusion in the World. But he that persuades the Poor to be modest, as well as the Rich to be charitable ; that puts private Persons in mind of subjection, as well as great Men of generosity and mildness ; that disposes Young Men to reverence the gray hairs of the Aged, as well as them to do worthily of their respect and gravity, subserves the Divine Providence in his wise method of preserving Peace and Order, and lays the first foundation of good Government. For the foundation of all Laws and Magistracy is to be laid in the Hearts and Principles of Men ; and unless a modest reverence of Superiority be first settled there, the exercise of meer Power and Authority will be very difficult and insuccessful. So that it is in the power of private Persons to promote publick Government, and the office of vertuous Men to do so.

2. The second office of a Christian in his Parish, is, to promote Justice and Honesty amongst the Neighbourhood, in all their dealings and transactions one with another. It is commonly and truly said, That Justice is the Pillar of the World : And therefore it is observable, that the  
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Great Creator and Governor of the World usually interposes by a visible Providence, more in behalf of this Vertue, than of any other ; insomuch, that Oppression, and those secret instances of Injustice, which cannot ordinarily be discerned and punished by the hand of the Magistrate, seldom escape a Curse and Divine Vengeance in this Life. For besides the mischief that such sins do to humane society, they are arguments of great Infidelity and Atheism ; forasmuch as it plainly betrays that Man to have no persuasion of a World to come, who can be tempted, for the sake of the present World, to do such base and unworthy actions ; and therefore it is as well an act of Piety towards God, and of Charity to Men, as of advantage to the state of Civil Society, to use all endeavours to prevent such kind of transgressions.

. But it is not only strict Justice which I here intend, but my meaning is to take it in the full latitude, so as to comprise Truth, and Faithfulness, and Equity also ; that Men be true in their Assertions, faithful and steady in their Promises, and equitable and candid in all their Dealings ; and so far from doing violence to each other, that they do not enterprize to outwit, surprize or over-reach one another, but  
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that they use a humane temper, and express a publick spirit ; and, in a word, that they govern themselves by that Golden Rule, *of doing to others as they would be content to be done unto*, every Man making the case of his Neighbour to be his own.

And this I the rather represent to the good Christian's care ; because this kind of Injustice is become another very common and epidemical sin of the age, and Men seem to applaud themselves, in being able to cheat beyond the cognizance of humane Laws, and to play upon and abuse the simplicity, credulity or inadvertency one of another.

For prevention and remedy of which, the Person we speak of, must, in the first place, render himself a great Example of Integrity and Equity, especially because the measures of these Vertues cannot be so well delivered by the prescription of any Laws whatsoever, as they may be express'd in the Life, and observed in the Conversation of good Men. And, in the next place, he ought to endeavour, by discourse, to make those he converses with sensible of the baseness and villainy of Injustice, by representing the sordid love of the World, from which it proceeds ; the distrust in God's Providence, with which  
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it is accompanied ; or rather the utter unbelief of a God, by which it is encouraged. How treacherous and cowardly a thing is it to work upon other Mens necessity or facility : how selfish and unneighbourly a thing to have no respect to any thing but our own private interest : how little is commonly gotten at last by such kind of courses ; and to how little purpose, since a Man cannot but expect the curse of God upon his honest endeavours (otherwise) for the sake of his unjust acquisitions ?

3. The third office of good Neighbourhood, is, to endeavour to bring into fashion again that almost antiquated vertue of simplicity and plain-heartedness in our discourses and communications ; that Men, especially Neighbours, should ordinarily be free, and open, and plain to one another, without cunning and scrupulous reservation, than which nothing is more suitable to the relation of Neighbours, nothing more friendly and obliging ; for it makes conversation safe and easie, when Men express a moderate confidence one in another : And although this, like some of the lesser Stars, make no great shew in the World ; yet it is of very great influence to sweeten the tempers of Men, and improve the comforts of Society. Besides,

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it is an argument of sincerity of heart, of competent assurance of a Man's own judgment, and a real instance of true greatness of mind ; whereas little artifices of concealment are justly look'd upon as the disguises of weakness, or the prefaces to fraud, and consequently render a Man either dangerous or contemptible to those he converses with.

Some Men, indeed, please themselves much in closeness and caution, and count it not only a point of prudence, but a piece of state and greatness to live in the dark to all about them ; but it is easie to observe, that if any Men admire such Persons for their depth, they withal suspect them for their designs, and to be sure do not love them.

I acknowledge there is such a thing as a prudent and virtuous secrecy and taciturnity, which is very commendable and necessary in some cases ; for no Man values him that labours under a looseness of tongue, and an incontinency of mind, so that he cannot keep his own counsel : And who shall trust him with their secrets, who is a blab of his own ? And it is well enough said, that nakedness of Mind is as undecent as that of the Body. But then, on the other side, must a Man be accounted naked,

naked, unless he cloath himself in Armour? To be always upon the Ward, and to stand continually upon our guard, as if we were in an Enemy's Country, is at least un-neighbourly and disobliging. For besides that such an artificial conversation is very troublesome to both Parties, in regard, on the one hand, it is very difficult to the reserved Man always to stand bent, so as never to betray himself, and then he spoils all his design: And, on the other hand, it puts other Men upon their guard too; for Men are naturally shy of those whom they observe to be constantly and rigidly close, and so conversation is interrupted; whereas nothing unlocks other mens hearts, like the opening of our own to them.

Again, Too great reservedness, as it is always entertained with jealousy and suspicion for the present, so it commonly breeds disputes and contests in the conclusion; whereas plain-heartedness hath no rubs and difficulties in its way, nor no after-game to play; for every Man believes and trusts such a Man as plays upon the square, and such a conversation is pleasant and acceptable.

Moreover, Cunning is always look'd upon as an argument of a little Mind, and a cowardly Temper; for what should

tempt a Man to dissemble and work underground, but mistrust of his own abilities, or consciousness of evil designs ; and this is so far from affording a Man any security, that it provokes other Men first to pry the more curiously into him, and then to countermine him, and at last to expose him.

To all which add, That if this Reservedness we speak of proceeds from insincerity and design, it betrays great unbelief of God and of Providence ; for the clear apprehensions of those great points will encourage a Man to be open, and plain, and confident : but if it proceed from temper and constitution only, yet even then it doth far more harm than good, and particularly (as I said before) it makes life and conversation very uncomfortable, and good neighbourhood plainly impossible ; and therefore it is well worthy of the care and endeavours of a good Man to reduce and recover the ancient sincerity and simplicity, instead of that hollow complementary hypocrisie which hath of late supplanted and excluded it.

4. But yet care is to be taken withal, that this plainness and simplicity degenerate not into rudeness, or frothy and foolish conversation ; and therefore it is the fourth  
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office of a vertuous Man, amongst his Neighbours, to endeavour to render Conversation favoury, and manly, and profitable, as well as sincere; that is, that it be neither trifled away with flat, insipid and gossiping impertinence, nor mis-employed in light and idle drollery, nor turned into an occasion of tipling and sensuality, much less debauched by profaneness and malapert reflections on things sacred, but that it be applied to the furtherance of real business, to the bettering of Mens understandings, to vertuous purposes, and especially to the advantage of Religion. These last things are useful to the World, and worthy of Men; but the other are a mis-expenditure of time, a degrading of our selves, a reproach to our reason, and the bane of conversation.

With a peculiar respect to such things as these it is that Christians are called *the salt of the earth*, (as I observed before,) because they are not only to prevent the rottenness and putrefaction, but also the flatness and insipidity of conversation. And as for that which I intimated in the last place, namely, the consulting the advantage of Religion, I must now say further, That although it be true, That that is not the only subject of good Discourse, foras-

much as God allows us both the refreshment of our spirits, and a moderate concern about the affairs of this life; and therefore consequently the affair of another World ought not to be importunately thrust in upon all occasions, to the exclusion of other entertainments: yet most certainly it ought to have its place and share in our friendly communications, as being the most weighty and important subject, and, if it be dexterously managed, the most genteel and obliging. Neither will it be so very difficult as is commonly imagined, to turn the stream of neighbourly Discourse this way, if Men would be persuaded to try, and apply themselves seriously to it: And surely, he that hopes to attain the Joys of Heaven himself, cannot but wish his Neighbours in the way thither also; nor can he whose heart is thoroughly affected with the apprehensions of it, omit, now and then, to let fall something or other that way tending; at least, every good Man owes so much to God and Religion, as to interpose a good word, sometimes, in their behalf, which, besides that it gives some countenance to Piety for the present, may, by the blessing of God, make a greater impression than we are aware of, and redound to his own comfortable account another day. But,

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5. It is unquestionably the duty of every Christian, to labour, to the utmost of his power, to make and preserve Peace amongst his Neighbours. To this purpose, it is very observable, that our Saviour, *Mark ix. 50.* joins these two things together, *Have salt in your selves, and have peace one with another* : as if he had said, “Tho’  
“ you are the Salt of the Earth, yet you  
“ must take care you be not too sharp and  
“ acrimonious : You must, indeed, pre-  
“ serve the World from corruption, but  
“ yet you must not exasperate it into passion  
“ and disorder ; for you must compose  
“ Men to peace and quietness, and quench  
“ their combustions, as well as inflame  
“ their Zeal and Devotion.

And indeed, the latter of these can never successfully be undertaken, unless, at the same time, the former, be provided for ; for Religion never takes place in Mens hearts, nor brings forth fruits in their lives, when the spirits of Men are embroiled with heats and animosities. Men are not fit to consider of the counsels of the Gospel, nor to estimate the reason and importance of them, when their minds are in a flame, and their thoughts in an hurry. Nor, if they were already persuaded of them, could they be in a temper to com-

ply with them, or to make any fit expression of love and service towards God, whilst they are at variance with their Brethren; and therefore the Apostle tells us, *The fruits of righteousness are sown in peace*, Jam. iii. 18.

And as Peace is very advantageous to God's service, so the making and procuring it is very honourable and comfortable to them that are employed about it. They are under one of our Saviour's Beatitudes, and he entitles them *the Children of God*, in a peculiar manner, *Mat. v. 9. viz.* as being those who especially imitate and resemble him. And one instance of the blessedness of such Men is this, That they which make Peace, commonly reap the fruits of it, both in the benign and kindly chearfulness of their own spirits, and in the fair and courteous usage they generally meet with from other Men, as well as in the repose and quiet they enjoy when all the World is peaceable and still round about them: whereas Makebates and Incendiaries torment themselves first, before they torture other Men, and besides, bring the fire home to their own houses, when they have inflamed other mens.

The good Christian therefore is not only peaceable himself, but a Peace-maker  
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in his Parish ; to which end, he will, in the first place, discountenance all Whisperers, Eves-droppers and Tale-bearers, as the pest of Society ; for these are the Bellows that blow up a spark into a flame.

He will endeavour to prevent and take up Law Suits, which commonly begin in passion, and end in malice ; for the decision of them rather immortalizes the quarrel, than finishes the dispute ; and he that overcomes, very often, like the Bee, destroys himself, whilst he fastens his sting upon another.

He sets a mark upon them that single themselves from the rest of their Neighbours, and divide into Parties, as Men of a great deal of Pride, but of little Wit ; for a great and generous Mind would be easily able to animate such a Society as a Parish, and render himself considerable in the whole, without tearing it in pieces, that he may lead a Faction.

He detests and abhors all affected singularity, though the instance of it be in itself unblameable (so long as it is not absolutely necessary,) because he considers such things first raise Jealousie, then provoke Emulation, and at last end in alienation of affections.

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He endeavours, that no new Opinions in Religion may be broached amongst the Neighbourhood, as knowing well there can be no new Gospel, or new way to Heaven; and he hath learn'd by experience, that whilst Men stand gazing after new Lights, they make halt in the race of Vertue, and lose the way of Peace, without which, they shall never come at Heaven.

He endeavours therefore to keep up the ancient Land-marks, both in spiritual and temporal affairs; but if any Disputes be raised, he will presently bring water to quench the fire in the beginning, and by discreet and temperate Discourses encline both Parties to coolness and moderation, by representing the littleness of the matter in controversy between them, the great benefit of Unity and Concord amongst Neighbours, and especially by putting them in mind of the approaches of Death, which will very shortly take away the subject of the Question, and the Disputants too.

6. Sixthly, Next to this, and to the intent that his endeavours of making Peace may be the more successful, he will contrive to render his Person acceptable and fit to be interposed in quarrels, by making himself remarkable for all other offices of Charity and Beneficence, such as relieving  
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of the Poor to the very utmost of his ability, and by sympathizing with those he cannot help, by visiting the Sick, counselling the Weak and Injudicious, comforting the disconsolate, vindicating the Injured, rescuing the Oppressed, and taking the part of the Widow and Fatherless: By all which, and several other good offices, he will become a common Father and Friend to the whole Neighbourhood.

Most of these things may be performed without much cost or trouble; or if they will be chargeable either way, the expence be abundantly recompensed by the delight that attends the discharge of them; for they are commonly as comfortable in the doing to those that undertake them, as they are beneficial to those for whose sake they are undertaken. Thus, at a cheap rate, a Man becomes a Benefactor and a Blessing to the Times and Places where he lives, and besides, doth a singular service to God, vindicating his Providence in the unequal distribution of his temporal blessings, and he renders Religion lovely in the eyes of all the World, and he very effectually consults the comfort of his own Soul, giving proof to himself, that he *loves God whom he hath not seen, because he loves his brother whom he hath seen.*

7. Seventhly and lastly, (and to speak summarily,) It is the Duty and the Practice of a good Christian, by all the means he can devise, to promote the welfare and prosperity of his Parish and Neighbourhood, not only because it is far more comfortable living amongst those who are in a prosperous condition (as to their outward affairs) in regard that moderate prosperity sweetens Mens spirits, and betters their temper, as much as pinching want and necessity soures and disorders them; but also, because generally God is better loved and served by Men whose hearts are chearful and easie, than by the querulous and unhappy.

In order therefore to the wealth and prosperity of the place where he dwells, the good Christian will, in the first place, take care to prevent the idleness of the Inhabitants, by bringing in some Manufacture or other (if it be possible) that so all hands may be set on work in some honest way of living: for Idleness, besides that it makes a very ugly figure, cloathing the slothful Persons with Rags, it commonly enclines People to be great Eaters, having nothing else to do but to mind their Bellies, and so they become a sort of Caterpillars which devour other Mens labours;

bours ; it also tempts them, by their necessity, to pilfer, cheat, lye, and steal, and do any base action imaginable ; and moreover, such People are generally envious, malicious, busie-bodies, medlers in other Mens matters ; and, in a word, being desperate in their fortunes, they are past fear and shame. Whereas, on the other side, honest Industry, besides that it is attended with the blessing of God, renders People modest, quiet, governable, chearful, good-natured, and publick-spirited.

In the next place, and in pursuance of the same ends, The pious Parishioner will, as far as he is able, prevent tipling and drunkenness amongst his Neighbours, which is well known to be the common cause of Want amongst the inferiour sort of People ; for, this beastly way, they will swallow down presently that which might go a great way in the maintenance of their Families, besides that the custom of it loses their time, softens and relaxes their Nerves, and makes them impatient of labour ; it raises their passions, and abates their discretion, and so disposes them to be quarrellsome with their Families when they come home ; and, which is worst of all, renders them proud, insolent, and ungovernable. Fur-

Furthermore, The good Man will endeavour (if it be wanting, and the place be capable of it) to get a good School settled in the Parish, which, besides the great advantage of it for the education of Youth, doth generally enrich the place, and is more beneficial than a Manufacture; for this affords some employment for those Poor that are there already, and makes no more, nor draws other such to the place as Manufacture usually doth.

And lastly, To all this, a good Neighbour will endeavour to bring all vicious and incorrigible People to shame and punishment, than which nothing conduces more to the honour of Religion, to the peace of the Inhabitants, or the felicity of the Place.

There are notwithstanding some fond and incogitant People who think this course quite contrary to good Neighbourhood; and look upon those as the best Townsmen, that will connive at Mens Vices, and let every body do what they list: But with their leave, as it is the greatest kindness towards such vicious Persons, to make use of the provision which the wisdom of Laws hath made for their amendment; so he is the best Christian that discriminates between good and bad Men, as well

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as the best Townsman, who will not permit Vertue and Industry to be discouraged by the impudence and impunity of some lewd Persons : But so much for that.

These things which I have now treated of in this Chapter, are a certain kind of lesser Morals, and the peculiar instances of that which I called *Civil Piety* : But if the good Christian will (as he ought) take care of them, he will do at least a collateral service to Almighty God, by being a Benefactor to the World ; he will render the attendance upon Religion more easie, and make his own passage through the World towards Heaven the more quiet and comfortable, which is the thing aimed at all along in these Papers.



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**F I N I S.**

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